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THE TIMES



No. 66,402

TUESDAY JANUARY 5 1999

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Dawn Primarolo gets Robinson job

Labour feud claims its third victim

By JILL SHERMAN AND ROLAND WATSON

SENIOR members of the Cabinet urged their colleagues last night "to draw a line" under the most damaging episode of Tony Blair's period of government as the mortgage affair claimed its third big casualty.

Charlie Whelan, press secretary and chief spin doctor to Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, was forced to resign after continuing accusations that he was the culprit who leaked details of the £373,000 loan to Peter Mandelson from Geoffrey Robinson.

Mr Brown's consolation prize was the promotion of Dawn Primarolo, the former Secretary of State for Wales, to fill the gap left by Mr Robinson. There had been speculation that the job would go to Geoff Hoon, a Blair loyalist, a move that Mr Brown would have resisted. Ms Primarolo, former Financial Secretary, is fiercely loyal to Mr Brown and, after five years, is the longest-serving member of his Treasury team.

The Chancellor also found a job for another ally, Michael Wills, a wealthy independent television producer, has been appointed Trade and Industry Minister, but is taking no salary. However, the two appointments will do little to compensate the Chancellor for losing one of his most powerful supporters in government. Other moves were fairly neutral, with Stephen Timmins moving up within the Social Security De-



Whelan: denied being the source of mortgage leak

partment to replace John Denham as Pensions Minister. Mr Whelan, 44, returned from a walking holiday in the Scottish Highlands to announce that he would be leaving the Treasury "as soon as the appropriate opportunity becomes available".

He strongly denied that he had leaked the details that led to the downfall of both ministers, but said that the level of media speculation about the affair made it impossible for him to carry on as Mr Brown's press secretary.

The Tories seized on the statement and demanded Mr Whelan's early departure. They argued that he could not remain and be privy to Budget secrets and urged Sir Richard Whelan, the Cabinet Secretary, to ensure that such access was stopped.

There were also questions about whether Mr Whelan

would have to wait for three months or longer before being able to take up a job in the private sector, where there could be a conflict of interest. But with Mr Blair away on holiday in the Seychelles, other senior Cabinet ministers tried to move the focus away from the spin doctors and ministerial rivalries that have dominated the headlines for more than two weeks.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, who is said to have been one of several ministers calling for Mr Whelan's removal, said it was time to draw a line under recent events. "The key political issue is not obsession with so-called 'spin doctors' or 'leaks', but the Government's determination to keep the promises it made to the electorate," he said. "That is what the country and Labour party members expect of us and that is what we intend to do."

Downing Street also tried to mount a damage-limitation exercise, putting out a supportive statement about Mr Whelan, who has been widely accused in the past of briefing against Cabinet ministers.

But there was an almost audible sigh of relief from several members of the Government who have blamed Mr Whelan for creating unnecessary tensions between Mr Blair and Mr Brown over the past two years.

Mr Whelan decided to resign after several conversa-



Primarolo, who has been appointed Paymaster General to replace Geoffrey Robinson

tions with Mr Brown and Ed Balls, the Chancellor's economic adviser, but his fate was inevitable as soon as he was "fingered" by friends of Mr Mandelson on the night the horse loan was disclosed in the press. Yesterday Mr Whelan said that it became impossible for

him to stay in his job once he became the story.

"It is absurd that, on the day the euro starts trading, in the week the Monetary Policy Committee is meeting and when the Chancellor is working on a number of important initiatives for the new year,

there is such attention focused on me," Mr Brown, who was said to have been desolate at his press secretary's resignation, refused to comment.

Welan crisis, pages 6, 7
Michael Gove, page 16
Leading article, page 17

Markets rally as the world shows faith in the euro

By CHARLES BREMNER
AND JILL SHERMAN

EUROPE'S fledgling currency was celebrated by the financial markets in a day's trading that saw it rise against the dollar while continental stock markets enjoyed near-record surges.

European Union leaders greeted the smooth launch in the City, the Continent, Wall Street and Asia as a sign of confidence that the 11-nation euro is set to be a world currency alongside the dollar.

"This is an historic day," said Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission. "Let us for once congratulate ourselves without too much modesty. With the euro, Europe will be better equipped to control its destiny."

Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, hailed the euro's advent, saying: "I know that it will make Europe move forward and it will force us into new stages of integration." Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Belgian Prime Minister, said the successful first day was "a moment in the history of Europe that was considered impossible just ten years ago."

The single currency, which has a domestic economic base comparable to the dollar's, ended European trading at around 1.18 dollars, well above the 1.16 level which was held last week by the ecu, the EU basket currency that was its predecessor. The EU hopes the euro will not strengthen too much, given the damage it would inflict on euroland's exports. The European Central Bank (ECB) was rumoured at one stage yesterday to have intervened to support the dollar.

The City, which bore the brunt of the switchover as the world centre of currency trading, missed out on the "euro-

phoria" which swept the Continent's stock markets. The FTSE 100-share index ended 0.05 per cent down while Milan posted the currency with a record 6.4 per cent rise. Frankfurt shares rose 5.7 per cent, Madrid by 6.2 per cent and Paris by 5.2 per cent.

The United States welcomed the euro, signalling nervousness over pressure on the domestic economy as the dollar's hegemony as the international currency comes under challenge. Robert Rubin, the Treasury Secretary, said: "The euro re-emphasises how important it is that we focus on our own policies and continue to make the United States a place where people want to invest their capital by having sound policies here."

Tony Blair welcomed the first day of trading with a commitment to helping the single European currency to succeed. In an article in *The Wall Street Journal* the Prime Minister said: "If the euro works and the economic benefits are clear and unambiguous, we would recommend entry, with the British people having a final say in a referendum." The views were seen as his most pro-euro statements.

Living with euro, page 10
Letters, page 17
Markets soar, page 23

Hospitals swamped by flu victims dialling 999

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

PANICKING flu patients are precipitating a crisis in the overstretched health service by making 999 calls to demand ambulances to take them to hospital.

Although flu levels are not abnormally high, health trusts are reporting emergency units at full stretch dealing with an influx of patients brought in by ambulance.

Dr Doug Fleming, who heads the Royal College of General Practitioners' infectious diseases monitoring unit in Birmingham, said: "Hospitals are the wrong place for flu patients. There is no curative treatment for flu and there is no point in going to see your doctor let alone going to hospital unless you have a serious chest disease or are elderly and living on your own. Going to hospital puts other sick people at risk so it is an irresponsible and selfish thing to do."

Perhaps because GPs are only sending the most serious

cases to hospital, patients are short-circuiting their doctors' waiting rooms and trying to get themselves admitted. This adds to the difficulties accident and emergency units are already facing in finding adequate staff and leads to many really ill people being left for hours on trolleys.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, said that the number of flu cases was putting hospitals under pressure, especially in the North West and West Midlands.

Ambulances were having to queue for 15 minutes outside the Royal Liverpool Hospital to unload flu patients. At the Royal Hull Hospital there were 38 patients crammed into a ward for 28 on one day last month. London Ambulance Service had 115 flu calls on two days over the holidays.

Yesterday a woman with meningitis had to be airlifted nearly 200 miles from Birkenhead on Merseyside to Mid-

disbrough in the North East because there were no intensive care beds available. In Nottingham nurses are being offered 20 per cent extra to work on the admissions ward.

The pressures are coming because hospitals, already suffering from nursing shortages, are losing more staff through the illness and are finding it all but impossible to staff the extra beds. Although the Government has earmarked £159 million to deal with the winter crisis, hospitals cannot recruit the nurses they need.

Officially there is no flu epidemic until over 400 cases per 100,000 of the population are confirmed to have the disease in a given week. Flu levels this year are following a similar pattern to those in the winter of 1996/97, when they peaked at 230 cases per 100,000.

This year the level on December 15 was just 28 cases per 100,000 but by New Year's Eve it had almost quadrupled



"Call an ambulance quickly - I'm about to sneeze"

to 102 per 100,000. The next set of figures are expected to show a further rise, especially in the South.

Sydney and Beijing flu, the two strains of the disease prevalent this year, appear to be spreading down from Scotland, where doctors began to notice a sharp rise from mid-November. The latest regional figures - issued on Christmas Eve - show there were 113 cases per 100,000 in the North, 103 per 100,000 in the Midlands and only 41 per 100,000 in the South.

Hospital alert, page 8

'Bombsite bird' threatens to stop work on the Dome

By GLENN OWEN, TIMES DIARY

WORK on the Millennium Dome could be halted by three pairs of black redstarts, one of Britain's rarest nesting birds. They have arrived at the construction site in Greenwich and it is against the law to disturb the "bombsite birds" once they begin nesting - due to happen next month.

Wildlife campaigners are demanding that Peter Mandelson's successor as Minister for the Dome - Lord Falconer of Thoroton - casts an eye over the Wildlife and Countryside Act. "They will have to stop working," says Ralph Gaines, head of conservation at the London Wildlife Trust. "The Act is clear that it would be illegal to disturb them. They will start nesting at the end of February, and the young do not leave until the end of July. We did stop some work in the area at the end of last summer when a pair were spotted."

Redstarts - relatives of the robin that gained their nickname after flourishing on derelict sites after the Second World War - are a threatened species. As few as 70 breeding pairs remain in the country, up to a third of which live in the capital and are known to be resident in nearby Deptford Creek. Three pairs are house-hunting in the construction site area.

The bird famously distracted Norman Lamont during the 1991 Maastricht negotiations. Then Chancellor, he told an alarmed Hans-Dietrich Genscher, at the time Germany's Foreign Minister, that a redstart had just flown past. Herr Genscher



Black redstart: in danger

was apparently reassured that such a precarious moment for Europe. Mr Lamont took such a characteristically British delight in nature.

Mike Everett, from the RSPB, has comforting words for the Dome's organisers: "The Act protects the bird, but it does allow them to be disturbed as the incidental result of a lawful action that could not have been avoided, so it depends on compromise."

The New Millennium Experience Company, which birders claim has banned them from the site, said: "We are aware that these birds have nested in the area and will take their rarity into account when deciding how to deal with them if they do so on the site this year."

Their arrival comes at a bad time for the £78 million Dome. The roof is on, but the work schedule is tight. It is, however, a home indeed for redstarts - they love "untidy, scrappy sites".

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New rules 'threaten care home closures'

Alexandra Frean on plans to ensure bigger rooms and better facilities

HUNDREDS of residential care homes for the elderly could be forced to close if national standards on room size and bathroom facilities are introduced.

In a survey of 400 independent care homes, 64 per cent of respondents said that they would be forced to close if the proposed standards, drawn up by the Centre for Policy on Ageing, became law.

Under the proposals, all single rooms must have no less than 10 sq m of useable space, but if a residential home changes hands, all single rooms must be extended to include an extra 2 sq m. Shared rooms will have to have 16 sq m of useable space. All newly registered homes will have to have en suite washing and toilet facilities.

Geoff Hodgson, editor of *Caring Times* magazine, which conducted the survey, said that smaller privately owned homes would be affected most by the changes. Owners of such homes often

planned to sell them on retirement and live off the proceeds but the imposition of the new standards would in many cases make it impossible to sell the homes as on-going business concerns as their rooms would be considered too small to meet the minimum requirements.

"Thousands of elderly could find themselves without beds in the short term if homes are forced to close," Mr Hodgson said.

The survey follows the resignation last month of Sheila Scott, chief executive of the National Care Homes Association, from the advisory board of the Centre for Policy on Ageing in protest at the proposed standards, which she called "an unprecedented attack on the private sector".

The proposed standards are due to be discussed by John Hutton, the Health Minister, and the Centre for Policy on Ageing at a meeting later this month.

Viagra sales fail to take off in Ireland

IRISH men are either very virile or exceptionally shy, (Audrey Magee writes). Initial reports show that demand for Viagra, the anti-impotence drug, is far lower than expected in the country where it is made.

The drug became available to the Irish public at the end of September. But pharmacies across the country report few if any sales. O'Connell's, one of Ireland's largest chain of retail pharmacies, has issued fewer than 100 prescriptions in Dub-

lin in the past three months. "We are very surprised. We thought the demand would be far stronger. But it appears not," said a spokeswoman.

Pfizer, the company that makes the drug in Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, declined yesterday to disclose their Irish sales figures but insisted that they were in line with expectations.

The Government had originally predicted that 18,000 Irishmen would want the drug, costing the exchequer around £20 million a year.



Tara Palmer-Tomkinson showing off her latest skiwear on the slopes at Klosters.

William misses royal ski holiday

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE Prince of Wales began his annual skiing holiday at Klosters in the Swiss Alps yesterday, but with a depleted family party.

He was accompanied by his younger son, Prince Harry, but Prince William had elected to stay at home and is understood to be spending time with friends in Scotland. The 16-year-old Prince is a less enthusiastic skier than his father and younger brother, and dislikes the media attention the royal party inevitably attracts.

Zara Phillips, daughter of the Princess Royal, was to have been in the party but had to postpone her departure because of flu. She hopes to be well enough to join her uncle and cousin later.

The prince, who flew into Zurich on Sunday on a BAe 146 aircraft of the Royal Squadron, has been joined by their regular companions, Tiggy Legge-Bourke, the young prince's former nanny, and by Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, who appeared on the slopes yesterday to show off her designer ski wear to photographers. It included her trademark white "Tara" hat and a one-piece navy blue ski suit and jacket by designer Sam de Turen.

Miss Palmer-Tomkinson, whose parents are long-time skiing companions of the Prince and whose mother narrowly escaped death in the Klosters avalanche that killed one of the Prince's aides, also disclosed that she was wearing designer underwear by Agent Provocateur and several layers of cashmere cardigans.

Today the prince will, as in previous years, pose briefly on the slopes for an arranged photocall in the hope that cameramen will then leave them alone until they return to Britain on Sunday.

But media attention has already intruded on their holiday. A Swiss news magazine has put up a huge poster near the ski runs showing the Prince of Wales, apparently smiling, peering over the top of a screen. The German caption translates as: "Not even the Prince of Wales can hide any secrets from us."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Blair off to Kuwait and South Africa

The Prime Minister is to visit Kuwait to meet the RAF crews who played a crucial part in the bombing raids on Iraq two weeks ago. Next Saturday Tony Blair, on his way back from an official visit to South Africa, will stop off at the Al Fajr Air Base to meet the personnel who flew the 12 Tornado GR1 jets during Operation Desert Fox.

The Prime Minister is also expected to meet leading Kuwaiti diplomats to try to persuade them to allow the Tornado jets to operate as bombers again. Mr Blair will be collected tomorrow morning from the Seychelles, where he has been holidaying with his wife and family, before flying to Pretoria for the start of his first visit to South Africa since he became Prime Minister.

Prison fires injure 16

Sixteen prison officers were injured by fires started by inmates at Maghaberry prison in Northern Ireland. They suffered smoke inhalation after prisoners lit four fires on Sunday and two on New Year's Eve. Another officer was treated for minor burns after tea was thrown over him. The prisoners started the fires to protest at being locked in cells for longer than usual. A Prison Service spokesman said that the lock-ups were necessary because of staff shortages.

Stun gun man jailed

A man who tried to sell stun guns used by American police was jailed for six months. The hand-held guns, which are capable of producing 100,000 volts and have led to a number of deaths, are legally used for self-defence in America. However, a judge at Warwick Crown Court rejected a suggestion by Peter Hawkins, 32, who had imported 100 stun guns worth £1,200, that he was unaware they were illegal in Britain. He ordered them in Florida to sell to women for self-defence.

Spacecraft on course

A \$138 million spacecraft lost by mission controllers last month was back on course for its historic rendezvous with an asteroid. On Sunday the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous satellite's rocket engines were successfully fired, boosting its speed by more than 2,000mph to 43,000mph. The craft, more than 200 million miles from Earth, is now chasing the asteroid, named Eros, and should catch up with it in just over a year.

Stalker barred again

The first man to be convicted of stalking is back in prison for harassing the same woman while on parole. Anthony Burslow, 39, of Slough, Berkshire, was jailed for 10 weeks for pestering Tracey Morgan, 30, after serving 15 months of a three-year sentence. Magistrates at Bracknell also served a restraining order banning Burslow from entering Berkshire and prohibiting him from having any contact with Ms Morgan, her family or friends. Indefinitely.

Lawyer in the drink

A solicitor specialising in alcohol-related cases is advertising his service on beer mats in pubs. Andy Lyall, from Dundee, has angered the Law Society of Scotland which claims that his promotional ploy is "not in accordance with the dignity of the profession". Mr Lyall, 52, said it was "eminently sensible" because many of his clients get into trouble because of drink. The beer mats bear his photograph, phone number and address with the words "Defence Lawyer".

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£5 coin honours Princess

By MICHAEL HARVEY

SIXTEEN months after her death, the Princess of Wales has taken her place on a coin of the realm.

The new £5 commemorative coin, which is to be unveiled by the Royal Mint today, is the first of four official memorials to the Princess. It features an elegant portrait in profile by the distinguished sculptor David Cornell, and on the reverse is a portrait of the Queen.

Widely seen as the most simple and tasteful of the memorial schemes, the coin is described as a "Crown". More than 10 million, in various editions, are expected to be sold worldwide.

Millions of pounds in profits will be used to fund the other official memorial projects, such as children's nursing teams, community awards for schoolchildren and the scaled-down memorial gardens near Kensington Palace.

The cupro-nickel alloy version of the coin is available from today from large post offices in a presentation folder for £9.95. The presentation packaging features previous

tributes to the Princess from the Queen and Earl Spencer, as well as a poem that was read by her sister, Lady Jane Fellowes, at the Princess's funeral.

Gold and silver versions of the coins priced at £95 and £32.50 will be available from April. The £5 legal tender version will be issued on July 1, the anniversary of the Princess's birthday.

The Royal Mint will produce as many coins as are needed to meet public demand. The mint expects that most people will buy the coin as a keepsake, and only a few are expected to go into general circulation.

The coin's design was approved by the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, chaired by the Duke of Edinburgh. It was also passed by the government body in charge of official memorials to the Princess, the Diana Memorial Committee, which is chaired by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor.

Representatives of the royal household and the Princess's sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale, also sit on the committee.

Mr Brown said yesterday: "The Diana Memorial Committee received over 10,000 suggestions from people from all walks of life."

"I know that many people want a fitting and lasting reminder of Diana, Princess of Wales. I am sure that this official commemorative coin will be treasured by the people of Great Britain."

The amount of profit to be donated to memorial projects will be at least £75 per gold coin, £5 per silver coin and £3 per base-metal version.

Mr Cornell, 63, a former engraver at the Royal Mint, is a fellow of the Royal Society of



The £5 coin issued today

British Sculptors. His portrait of the Princess was chosen because it was the most elegant and simple of several designs submitted.

Today's release is not the first time that the Princess has featured in the "Crown" series of coins, which is now issued annually by the Royal Mint.

She had previously appeared with the Prince of Wales in 1981 in a coin to commemorate their wedding. That coin sold nearly 9 million copies, but at the then lower face value price of 25p, the equivalent of five shillings.

The obverse side of the latest £5 coin displays the portrait of the Queen which appears on all UK coins minted from January 1998. It was designed by the sculptor Ian Rank-Broadley.

When the idea of a commemorative coin was first mooted, friends of the Princess noted she would have laughed at the irony of seeing herself sharing a coin with her former mother-in-law.

Last night the reality was deemed a fitting tribute by her brother Earl Spencer. Netlink: www.royalmint.com

Straw joins Blair in holiday controversy

By VICTORIA FLETCHER AND MICHAEL HORSNELL

THE Home Secretary is allowing his daughter to miss school for a family holiday, it emerged last night as the Prime Minister came under further criticism for failing to deliver his children for the start of term.

Jack Straw's daughter did not arrive for the first day of term yesterday because she was still on holiday abroad with her parents, according to fellow sixth-formers at her school in Central London. The whereabouts of the Straw family could not be officially confirmed for security reasons.

At the weekend the Prime Minister was accused of undermining David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, who recently gave warning that pupils should not miss school for holidays in term-time. Mr

Blair's sons are expected to start term 24 hours late at the London Oratory today, while their sister will be similarly late arriving at her primary school in Highbury.

Mrs Blair wrote to the respective head teachers before the family set off for their holiday in the Seychelles to explain that the children would miss the start of term today.

David Hart, leader of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that Downing Street's response missed the point. "It is not up to parents merely to tell a school that they will be missing a day of school," he said. "They have to ask, if they don't get permission from the head teacher, but still keep their child away, that is unauthorised absence."

David Willetts, the Shadow

Education Secretary, called for an explanation. "What is the truth? If permission for the boys' absence from school this week was not sought by Mrs Blair, as the headmaster, Mr McIntosh, claims, this raises very serious questions about the express information issued by the Downing Street spin machine," John McIntosh, head of the London Oratory, was not available for comment on when the Blairs told him about their holiday arrangements—or whether he had approved the children's absence.

A Downing Street spokesman warned: "The children have a right to privacy and there is a serious danger here of intrusion. The specifics of the communication should be a matter between the family and the schools."

20% rise in prison suicides

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

THE number of prisoners who killed themselves in jails in England and Wales last year rose by more than a fifth to 83. The increase came as the total prison population rose by about 7 per cent to an average of 65,300.

Richard Tilt, the retiring Director-General of the Prison Service, said the suicide increase was partially caused by the growing numbers in jail. He added: "Not all suicides are preventable and there are no simple solutions, but it is clear that we have a long way to go in tackling a problem which is mirrored in outside society." In 1997, the suicide rate at the 135 jails was 66.

The Howard League for Penal Reform said that nine of the dead were under 38.

هكذا من الإله

Kidnap gang planned to bomb British targets

Officials were not told of arrests, reports Daniel McGrory. Photographs: Peter Nicholls

THE leader of the gang that kidnapped 16 Western tourists in Yemen had been planning to bomb British targets in Aden five days earlier.

Abu Hassan wanted to exchange the hostages for three bombers police arrested as they were about to launch simultaneous attacks at five locations, including the British Consulate. The three, who were using fake British passports, also planned to blow up the Anglican church, and the Aden Hotel, where the surviving hostages were taken.

Scotland Yard detectives who arrived in Aden last night hope to discover more about the bombing operation, and the gun battle in which four hostages died, when they are allowed to question Hassan, who is being held in chains in a top security prison.

Yemeni security chiefs say the gaunt, bearded 28-year-old was the leader of the three bombers, who were seized as they were priming devices in their room at the cheap, backstreet Al Wafa hotel. The three men, who included a 27-year-old Iranian, claimed to have arrived in Aden from London.

The list of targets found in room 111 included a clinic next door to Christ Church and the Royal Hotel, which is used by 35 American soldiers training Yemeni forces in mine clearance. In the cluttered bomb factory, police also discovered automatic weapons, grenades and black hoods with eye slits.

General Mohammed Saleh Turabi, head of security for the Aden area, said yesterday: "The men we arrested told us the targets Abu Hassan chose for bombing were very big. Many people would have been killed if he had succeeded. There would have been much more blood than in the kidnapping." He said the three did not know of the kidnapping plot. British diplomats in the region are furious that the Yemeni authorities did not tell them of the bomb plot, or the arrests. They would have warned four groups to stay away from areas in the south east where Islamic groups are known to have camps. They also want to know why military escorts were withdrawn from tour convoys driving through the Shabwa and Abyan provinces, where Abu Hassan comes from and where the hostages were ambushed.

Diplomatic sources in Whitehall say Yemen's Interior Minister, Hussein Mohammed Arab, refused to meet Vice Henderson, the British Ambassador, until after the bungled raid because he knew that Britain was against the use of force. Britain had wanted to offer the use of the SAS who have a permanent desert base across the border in Oman, a short helicopter flight from where the hostages were being held on a volcanic plateau. Last night, Hassan was being held at Zinjibar, 115 miles from where the hostages were kidnapped on December 28. There is room for little more than a thin mattress and a blanket in his 6ft square, windowless cell.



The brothers arrested with Abu Hassan, Ahmed, left, and Saad Mohammed Ali Atif

In a series of photographs, acquired for The Times with the help of Yemeni security chiefs, Hassan is seen holding the chains that bind his ankles. His captors say Hassan, who is unmarried, has shown no remorse and claim his only regret "was that he did not kill all his hostages".

Hassan, whose real name is Zain al-Abidin Abu Bakar al-Mehdar, faces execution by a shot in the back of the neck after a trial that General Turabi said could be over in 48 hours. The Scotland Yard detectives, who are working with ten FBI investigators, are anxious to interview Hassan, and two brothers who were captured with him, before such swift retribution can be carried out. They hope to discover who

planned and funded his Al-Jihad group. "There is no doubt there is a foreign influence to all this. There could be a connection with Osama bin Laden, or someone else," General Turabi said, referring to the Saudi billionaire who is wanted for bombing American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last year. Bin Laden has family links with Yemen, and in the past six months some of his fighters, forced out of Afghanistan and Sudan, have moved there.

"The bombers we caught could be students of bin Laden, but they are connected to Hassan. They were trained outside Yemen. Abu Hassan is a link to a bigger organisation," the general added. Two of the bombers arrived at Al Wafa hotel in Aden's Carter market district on December 9, saying cash for their room and saying they had had come from London. They showed British passports,

which hotel staff remember were the old-fashioned type with hard blue covers: however, this was the first time they had been used.

Malek Mohsen Fadel, who is said by security sources to be a Yemeni, and Hamza Ali Said, a Pakistani, remained in Room 111 on the second floor for ten days until they were joined by an Iranian, Ahmed Sarmad, who was also travelling on a blue-covered, fake, British passport.

The three left the hotel the following day but checked back in on December 23 at 2.30am, in the same room. Two hours later, police arrived and showed hotel staff a photograph of the Iranian, whom they called Mohsen Galen. Staff led the armed officers to the room, where they are said to have found the men assembling bombs using plastic explosive stuffed into steel pipes.

One of the hotel employees, who helped police to search the room, said they found grenades hidden behind curtains, a small saw, a metal file, electrical wire, detonators, timers and the black hoods. There were leaflets about Islamic fundamentalist groups, including Hamas, and eight video cassettes. Police did not inform any of the targets on the bombers' list about their find.

Roger Bruggink, an Anglican priest at Christ Church in the Tawahi port area, said: "We live with the awareness of the dangers and recognise there are different people with different ideas who will use violence to get their way." Last year, a bomb was found in the church compound, which includes the Ras Morbat clinic, built in 1996. Security was stepped up around the 19th century church and the already well fortified Consulate only after the kidnappings.

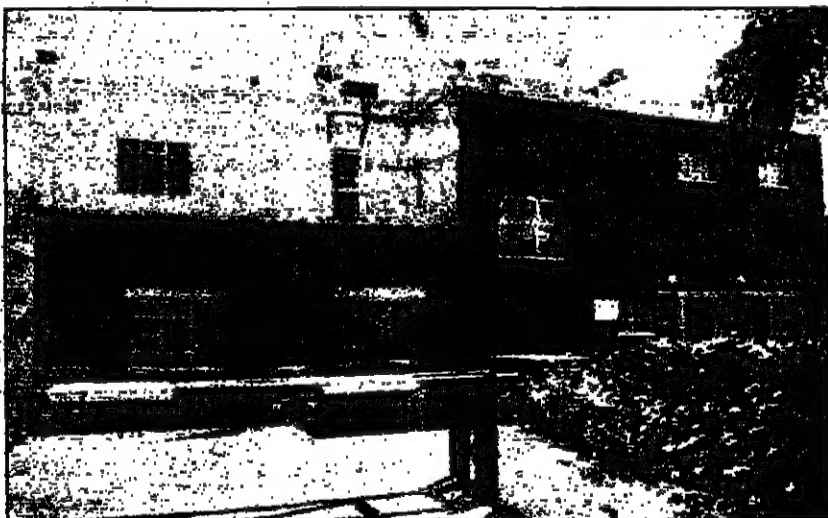
Yemeni officials believe that the intended spate of bombings on the five targets were revenge for Britain's part in the December air raids on Iraq. The 12 surviving hostages, now back in Britain, will be asked to identify Hassan from photographs that show him looking bedraggled in the same red and orange "futa" and grey and white T-shirt he wore during the kidnap.



Abu Hassan, being held in chains, led the bomb plot and kidnap gangs, officials say

are known to have funded their operations in part by armed robberies. They include an attack on a security van carrying nine million riyals (\$3,000 in teachers' salaries). Yemen said yesterday it was abandoning its attempt to join the Commonwealth after the diplomatic row with Britain over the hostage killings.

The brothers held in the same prison as Hassan, two more of the kidnap gang, also face the death penalty. Ahmed Mohammed Ali Atif and his younger brother, Saad Mohammed Ali Atif, are believed to come from the same area as Hassan. Upper Aulaqi in Shabwa. Hassan's Al-Jihad group



Police said that targets on the bombers' list included the Anglican church in Aden, Christ Church, the British Consulate and the Aden Hotel. Officials failed to warn any of the targets after the would-be bombers were arrested

Workers offered jam tomorrow

By SUSIE STEINER

THE celebrated jam-maker to the Queen, Wilkin & Sons, is transferring control of the company to staff in a philanthropic move of which its founding father would have been proud.

The firm has supplied the Royal Household since the turn of the century from its renowned Tiptree fruit bushes. It is now preparing to give the workers — from fruit sorters to label stickers — the casting vote in major company decisions. The move is designed to protect the firm from predatory buyers after the last family member retires. The chairman, Peter Wilkin, 58, has no heirs when he leaves, 110 years of family involvement will come to an end.

"There are no family members coming along, so when I shuffle off the scene what I wanted to avoid was someone snapping up the company, stripping the assets and throwing everything else away," Mr Wilkin said yesterday. "We

have had a lot of approaches from people to buy the firm but we are not interested in selling. The company name is very valuable and we have a very good reputation, and I want the company to continue in the same vein."

"The company has had very strong employee involvement since it started. My great-grandfather was a staunch Non-Confessionalist and very much into worker participation."

Arthur Wilkin established the firm in the Essex village of Tiptree in 1885. An altruistic manager, he set up a provident fund to help local people who fell on hard times and was one of the first employers to provide pensions. Tiptree still has 70 company homes, where present or former staff live at reduced rents.

The firm won the Royal Warrant of Approval in 1911, and the jam has been spread on Buckingham Palace toast ever since.

Suicide girl was afraid of bullies

By RUSSELL JENKINS

MARIE BENTHAM, the eight-year-old girl found hanged on Saturday, was frightened by school bullies, her family has revealed.

Karen Bentham, the girl's aunt, said: "Marie said she had been bullied at school and she did not want to go back. Her mum told her not to be so silly and Marie stormed off to bed. When she went to check on her later, she found her with a skipping rope around her neck."

"She pulled it off and rang for an ambulance. The paramedics arrived and did their best, but Marie was pronounced dead at the hospital."

Both Marie and her younger sister, Gemma, were pupils at Moorfield Primary School, near their home in Irlam, Manchester. It is understood that Marie's mother, Debbie Bentham, did not raise the issue of school bullying when she spoke to police about her daughter's death. Greater

Manchester Police said that any allegations regarding bullying would be considered as part of their investigation.

John Walsh, Marie's head teacher, described her death as a "terrible tragedy" and said that prayers were said for her during morning assembly.

Mark Carriline, Salford City Council's director of education and leisure, said in a statement: "There have been two instances in the last term when Marie's family raised concerns with the school about bullying. These were concerns the school took very seriously indeed and dealt with promptly and appropriately."

"In each case the circumstances were fully investigated and the local authority policy was followed to the letter. Neither of those instances involved anything out of the ordinary. They reflected the type of concerns that many parents raise during the course of the school year."

Cocker pulps plans for Disco 2000

By ALEX O'CONNELL

JARVIS COCKER is clamping down on plans to use Disco 2000 as the soundtrack to the millennium.

The lead singer of Pulp has asked his record company, Island Records, to send notice to television producers who might have been planning to use the song.

Phil Savage, of Savage & Best, the PR company that represents the band, said: "Pulp are obviously making the decision that it will be more lucrative this way. The band might want to stop it being sold to TV now so that they can become multi-millionaires in the future."

They had stopped playing it on tour but

now they have started performing it again at a few shows."

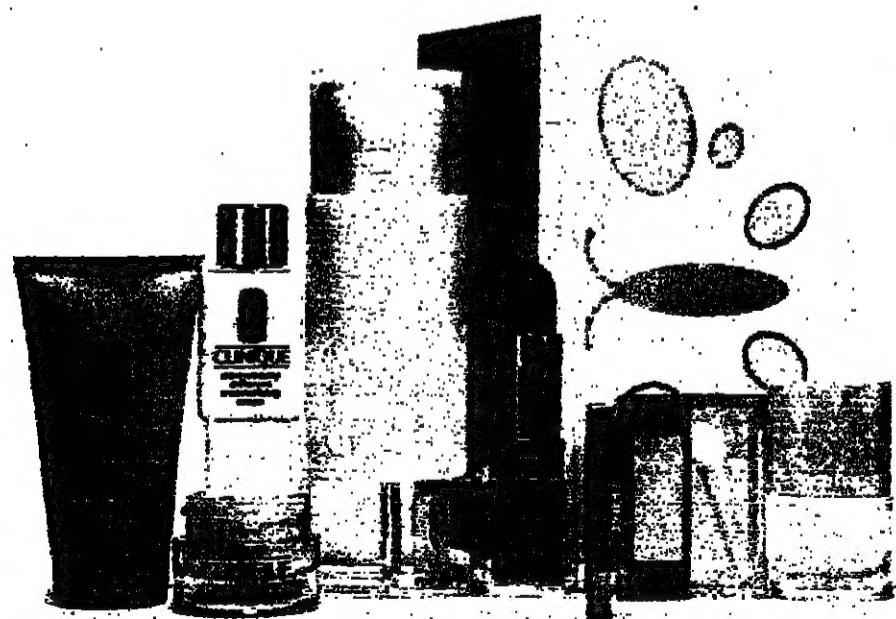
The song's chorus, "Let's all meet up in the year 2000/won't it be strange when we're all fully grown?", makes it a natural millennium soundtrack.

Mr Savage, who acknowledged that bands could earn about £50,000 for the use of their music in a television advertisement, said: "Pulp are obviously making the decision that it will be more lucrative this way. The band might want to stop it being sold to TV now so that they can become multi-millionaires in the future."

He added that the single was now hard to obtain, but he did not rule out the possibility of the band repackaging and re-releasing it this year.

A spokesman for Channel 4 said: "It is certainly too early to tell if the track is going to be used. Any millennium programmes would still be in production."

Kathryn Kelly, BBC spokesperson for millennium programming, said that it would not matter if Cocker prevented use of the song. "It doesn't really make any difference to us. There is a lot of other music that would be relevant."



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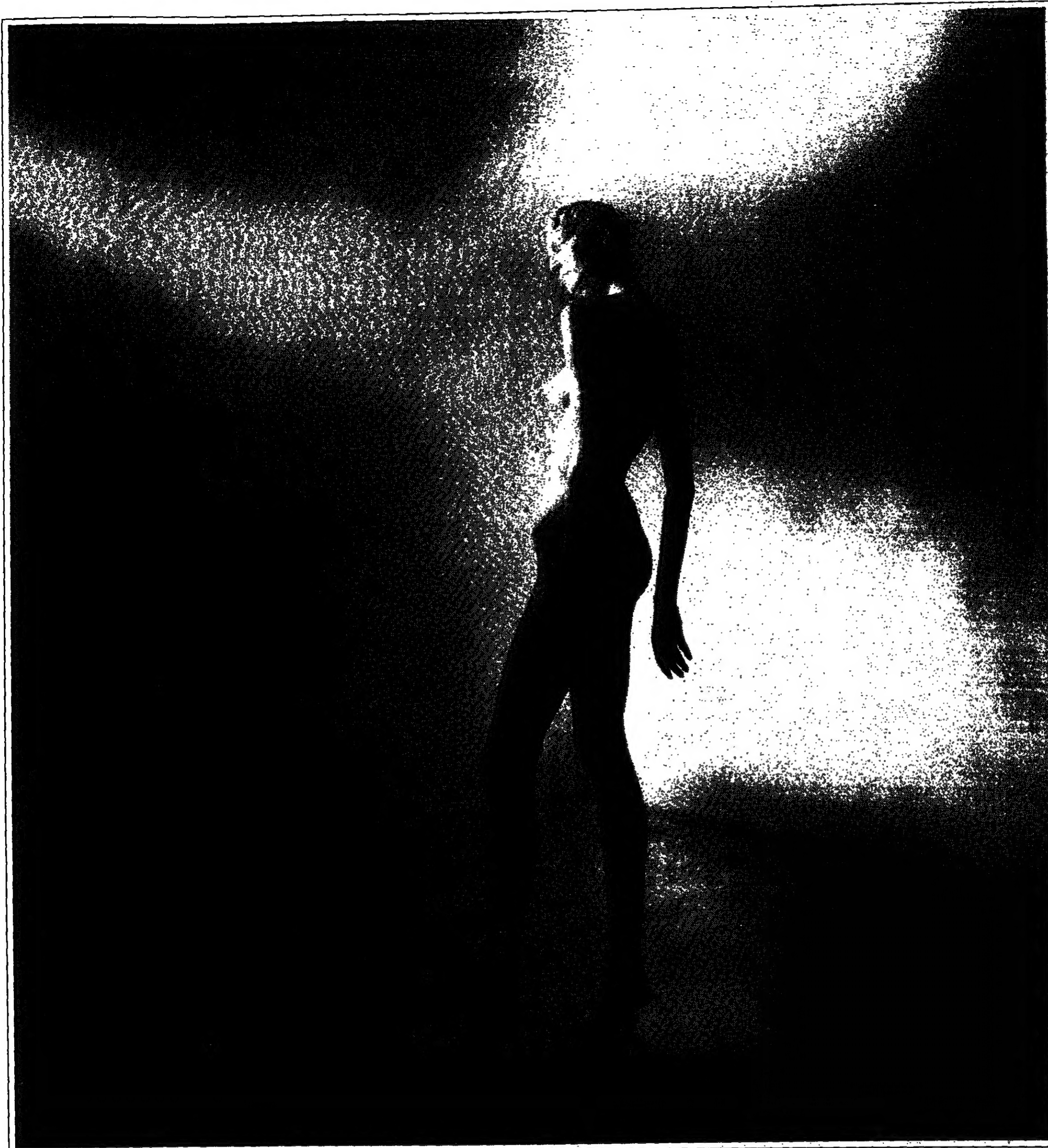


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December 21: "I have done nothing wrong. Anyone who throws mud at me will find it will not stick" Peter Mandelson, defending Geoffrey Robinson's loan



December 22: "Why should he tell lies?" Mrs Mary Mandelson



December 23: "It is no exaggeration to say that without your support and advice we would never have built New Labour" Tony Blair in reply to Mandelson's resignation letter



December 24: "He is an extremely gifted politician and I have no doubt that... his career will be far from over; we shall see his agenda" Paddy Ashdown on Mandelson



December 25: "Mandelson is not coming back, not in this century, and not in the next" senior Cabinet minister



December 26: "Ironically... he had become the Dr Gullivern of the revolution. The devices he invented have cut short his ministerial career" Lord Hattersley on Mandelson



December 27: "He has been a bloody fool, but he is not corrupt... he was too colourful, too much and clever for his own good" Robert Harris, author and friend of Mandelson



December 28: "If you're looking for a friend, yes, he is certainly it. He's flown on the plane but it was not business only as a friend" Linda Woodhead, US lingerie millionaire

Brown gave Whelan time to plot exit

BY ROLAND WATSON AND JILL SHERMAN

THE great irony about Charlie Whelan's departure is that it saw him following the advice of his arch-enemy, Peter Mandelson. "My fear is that drift is harming you," wrote the former Trade Secretary. "You need to implement a strategy to exit with enhanced position, strength and respect."

The words were not offered to Mr Whelan, but to his boss Gordon Brown nearly five years ago as Westminster waited to see whether he would run to succeed the late John Smith as Labour leader. They form part of the memo that Mr Brown's camp has ever since labelled "the great betrayal", claiming that Mr Mandelson's offer of support was in stark contrast to his campaigning for Tony Blair.

But Mr Mandelson's "strategy to exit" for Mr Brown could just as well apply to Mr Whelan's announcement yesterday that he would be stepping down "at the appropriate time". His resignation followed a fortnight of mounting pressure which has seen the 44-year-old former communist accused of being — and denying that he was — the catalyst for the pre-Christmas resignations of Mr Mandelson and Geoffrey Robinson, the former Paymaster General.

He finally made up his mind to quit on Sunday during the train journey south from his holiday hideaway in the Highlands.

Mr Whelan, blamed by his Labour critics for putting his loyalty to Mr Brown above that for the Blair Government as a whole, realised that he would do his patron more harm than good by staying. He had spoken to the Chancellor on the Saturday evening to tell him so, and that he had all but resolved to go.

After arriving at King's Cross station on Sunday evening and travelling across the capital to his home in Peckham, southeast London, he

Spin doctor was victim of rivalry between Labour factions that many believed he instigated

again called the Chancellor and told him that he was reconciled to resigning. He sat down at his kitchen table to draft his resignation statement and arranged to meet Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's spokesman, the next morning to arrange the logistics of the announcement.

The formalities of yesterday, however, had been the result of weeks, if not months, of behind-the-scenes discussions between Mr Whelan and his boss, not to say the subject of speculation among ministers and gossip on the Westminster grapevine. Even before the disclosure of Mr Mandelson's home loan deal with Mr Robinson saw both of them leave their jobs, Mr Whelan and Mr Brown had talked about the possibility of him leaving.

Although his constant companion for the past five years and the man credited with helping to make Mr Brown the most popular post-war Chancellor, Mr Whelan's reputation was in danger of becoming as crumpled as one of his suits.

Those — including Mr Blair, whose attempts to have him sacked after the election failed — who claimed Mr Whelan's dark skills were best served to Opposition rather than government were soon claiming evidence.

Since early last year No 10 officials have been trying to tell their neighbour that his Spurs-supporting sidekick whose aggressive manner belied his past as the middlefield engine of the First XI at Otterburn, a state school in Surrey, if not his role in HMS Pin-

fore and other school productions, was damaging the Chancellor.

Whether it was disclosing to a TV documentary that he did not always tell the whole truth, or being blamed as a chief source of the Gordon Brown biography that severely damaged relations between Nos 10 and 11, or briefing the press on his mobile phone from outside Whitehall's Red Lion pub about a shift in the Government's policy towards the single currency, Mr Whelan's often unguarded and always colourful manner has attracted critics. Each time his continued position was raised, but Mr Brown refused to fire someone who had become one of his closest friends.

But it was in November, when a newspaper briefing sourced to Mr Whelan threatened to re-open the wounds between Mr Brown and Mr Mandelson with a vengeance, that his future became an active topic of discussion in the Treasury.

Whitehall sources suggest Mr Whelan could have been on his way over the Christmas recess anyway by agreement, but then the Mandelson-Robinson affair surfaced to muddy the waters.

In the immediate aftermath, Mr Brown encouraged his spin-doctor to lie low. According to Whitehall sources, he also indicated to Mr Blair that Mr Whelan, branded "a little bit" by one unnamed Downing Street official, would be gone before the return of the Commons next week.

What remained was for Mr Whelan to be allowed to plot his exit strategy.

As far back as last Tuesday senior ministers were talking up Mr Whelan's qualities. Late that day the Treasury suddenly put out a statement saying Mr Brown stood by his man.

There followed later in the week an explicit message from No 10 that not only was there no evidence against Mr Whelan for the Mandelson leak, but that Downing Street officials did not believe he was the source. During weekend interviews Margaret Beckett, the Leader of the House, who has herself been on the wrong end of many a Charlie Whelan-inspired story, was effusive with her praise.



Charlie Whelan is surrounded by reporters as he arrives at the Treasury yesterday morning before announcing that he was about to quit

Although the signals may have appeared to point in one direction, they combined to allow Mr Whelan to depart with more of an enhanced position, strength and respect than if he had been sacked.

Few doubt that Mr Whelan's departure leaves Westminster a grayer place. None of his colleagues match the colour of his language, his stamina at the bar or the savagery of his put-downs.

But that is also why many ministers and MPs were privately welcoming the fact that the man dubbed yesterday by one as "an accident waiting to happen" was on his way.



The young Whelan, left, in a play at Ottershaw School

HOW THEY PLAYED MUSICAL CHAIRS

THE lives of a dozen ministers, MPs and advisers have been turned upside down by the events of recent weeks.

Peter Mandelson resigned as Trade and Industry Secretary over his £373,000 home loan from Geoffrey Robinson. Mr Robinson resigned as Paymaster General after the disclosure but was going to quit anyway after attacks on his past business dealings.

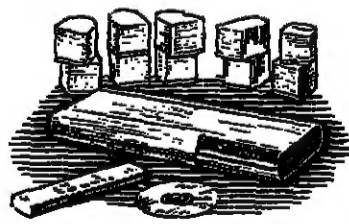
Charlie Whelan, Gordon Brown's press secretary, is to leave his job.

Stephen Byers, former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, became Trade Secretary. Alan Milburn, former Health Minister, joined the Cabinet as Chief Secretary. John Denham, former Social Security Minister, promoted to Health Minister.

Stephen Thomas moved up in Social Security Department. Hugh Bayley, former PPS to Health Secretary, became Social Security Minister. Dawn Primarolo, Financial Secretary to Treasury, becomes Paymaster General. Barbara Roche, former Trade and Industry Minister, becomes Financial Secretary. Michael Wills, MP for Swindon North, becomes junior Trade Minister (unpaid). Ben Wegg-Prosser, Mr Mandelson's former special adviser, is out of a job.

Despite a move all but being announced by Downing Street, Geoff Hoon stays put in the Lord Chancellor's Department. Although Mr Hoon was lined up to replace Mr Robinson, Lord Irvine of Lairg objected to losing him.

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It's now time for Brown to move on

GORDON BROWN no longer needs Charlie Whelan. Like the already departed Geoffrey Robinson, Mr Whelan belongs to Mr Brown's Prince Hal days. The roistering band of lads ate pizzas, watched football and plotted a new economic strategy, albeit in the elegance of the Grosvenor House rather than the more lowly Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap.

That was fine for Opposition, but, in office, Mr Brown has outgrown this phase. So their resignations are a liberation, a chance for Mr Brown to develop as Chancellor to demonstrate that he has "turned away from his former self" and "those that kept me company".

The danger is that Mr Brown will, instead, see the departures of Mr Whelan and Mr Robinson as a personal defeat and a victory for his enemies. So he may turn even more upon himself.

Mr Brown's main flaw is his factionalism, his preference for working with tight groups of advisers and long-term allies, and his suspicion of the motives

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

and actions of other Labour leaders. That fed the destructive rivalry with Peter Mandelson that has so sapped and divided the Blair Government. As so often, the real damage was often done by acolytes spreading rumours.

Mr Whelan was the ultimately loyal courtier, and, at times, court jester who defended and promoted his master in all the low insinuations of the press. Often, it was his combative, rumormongering style that stirred conspiracy theories more than any news he leaked; not least because, in contrast with Ed Balls, the Chancellor's economics adviser, he was generally on the outside of policymaking. But as Mr Whelan recognised in his statement yesterday, once he became the story, he lost much of his usefulness to Mr Brown.

The repeated flurry of "Brown versus ..." stories have damaged the Chancellor, just as he indirectly suf-

fered from the continuing run of allegations against, and inquiries about, Mr Robinson. Mr Brown's defensiveness and cliquishness — as so far expressed through people such as Mr Whelan and Brownite MPs — have reduced, rather than enhanced, Mr Brown's standing. Other Cabinet ministers are wary of him.

Mr Brown is a far more considerable figure than all this speculation suggests. Few would guess that he spent much of the second half of last year pushing international financial reform. In private, he is relaxed, witty and intellectually wide-ranging, by far one of the most thoughtful members of the Government. He should allow this more open side of his personality a fuller play. He does not need to fear conspiracies or plots. He needs, above all, to relax, and not to look over his shoulder all the time. Unlike most recent

Chancellors, Mr Brown has the strong backing of his Prime Minister, even though Tony Blair is at times exasperated by his old friend. Over the past few days, Mr Blair has been insisting that nothing must be said or done to undermine Mr Brown.

One sign of Mr Brown's continuing influence is that one of his close allies, the talented former television producer Michael Wills, has been brought into Government as a junior minister.

Mr Whelan's departure offers a chance to clear the air after Peter Mandelson's resignation two weeks ago and to find a more low key and conventional personal press officer. Mr Brown should recognise this rather than regard the Whelan/Robinson exit as a cause for further recriminations. Mr Whelan has served him well, at times too well. But it is time to move on from Prince Hal. Mr Brown is now a bigger man and should behave accordingly.

PETER RIDDELL

'Quite a catch' for the private sector

Carol Midgley looks at the career opportunities open to a man with inside knowledge of the Treasury

THE resignation of Gordon Brown's rumbustious press secretary sparked a new Whitehall debate yesterday: what will Charlie do next?

Rumours about Mr Whelan's career prospects were rife almost as soon as he announced he was stepping down. Close friends were said to be urging him to cash in by writing a book about his time at the Treasury. The World at One on BBC Radio 4 suggested he was considering a career as a television chat show host or a political pundit.

Mr Whelan, who studied politics at the City of London Polytechnic, is understood to have ruled out working for any other Whitehall department and intends to try his luck in the private sector.

Experts predicted a deluge of job offers from public relations, lobbying and City firms

that would more than treble his £50,000 salary. His knowledge of the Chancellor and the Treasury would make him a valuable commodity, particularly for City consultants.

Lord Bell quashed early rumours that Mr Whelan was being lined up to work for his company, Bell Pottinger. "I have never met Charlie Whelan or even spoken to him," he said. "But he will find with real PR you have to work rather harder to get stories in the press than you do based in Whitehall. In politics, you don't have to sell stories, you have regular lobby briefings."

"It's very difficult to adapt to the private sector. People don't ring you up — you have to ring

them. I don't know... Charlie Whelan may be fantastically brilliant but what the press often describes as great spin-doctoring is no more than selling stories which would have sold anyway, if they had just appeared on a screen."

One lobbyist, who asked not to be named, said: "Charlie has been very high profile and a lot of chief executives don't like hiring people whose name is more famous than the company's. But he has the gift of the gab and he will be in a top job pretty soon. He does swank a lot but he is incredibly loyal."

A financial commentator said Mr Whelan may set up his own consultancy as he

may be too "larger than life" to fit into a big organisation.

Britain's most famous press manager, Max Clifford, predicted a financially rosy future for Mr Whelan. "Anybody who has been at the centre of policy, ideas and activities, is hugely attractive, particularly to the City," he said. "By going into the private sector he could pick up £500,000 a year easily. You are aware of so much that other people would love to know about. Just think of a multinational company that is desperate to know how Gordon Brown is thinking."

One political consultant close to Mr Whelan, however, predicted he would follow in

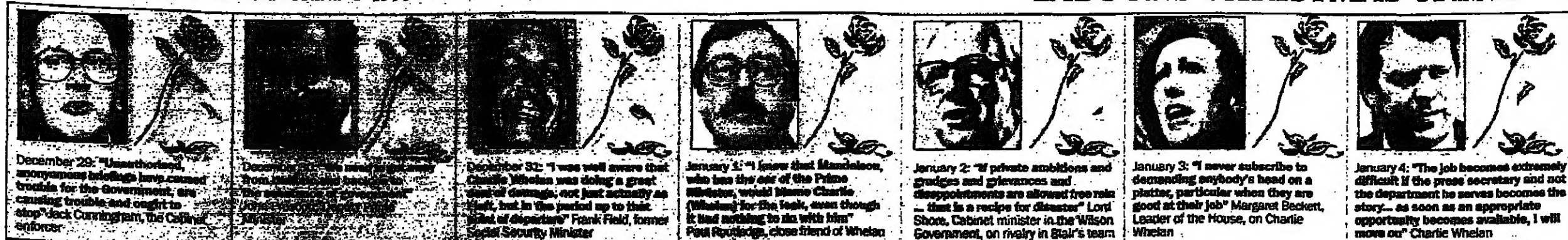
the footsteps of Baroness Thatcher's former press secretary, Sir Bernard Ingham, and become a television pundit. "Charlie could well end up being someone like Ingham, giving his opinions on the issues of the day and occasionally doing a bit of consultancy work. He would be great," he said. "He's a good communicator and knows the Government inside out. If he learnt about the commercial world, he could advise companies about their position with the Government and the Treasury. Knowing Charlie, he'll want to remain political. If he went into the City working for merchant bankers or financial institutions, with his knowledge of government and the company he could make a lot more. He'd be quite a catch."

Leading article page 7

Crony C
Blair's
takes on

Red Dawn
rewarded for
her loyalty

سكز لمن لا يصل



Crony claim as Blair's friend takes on Dome

By Richard Ford, Home Correspondent

TONY BLAIR faced fresh charges of cronyism from the Conservatives last night after handing one of his oldest friends the responsibility for the Millennium Dome.

Lord Falconer of Thoroton, who shared a house with the Prime Minister in their days as young barristers, is taking over as government shareholder in the Dome, overseeing the £738 million Greenwich exhibition following the resignation of Peter Mandelson.

Lord Falconer was ennobled after the 1997 election, became Solicitor-General, then moved to be Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, which gives him a seat on 14 cabinet committees. Last night he said: "The Dome at Greenwich will be the centrepiece of the UK's hugely diverse celebrations in the year 2000. Much has been achieved so far to deliver it on time and on budget. The year ahead holds further challenges to which I am sure the New Millennium Experience Company is more than equal."

Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, will answer questions on the Dome in the Commons, but Lord Falconer will have ultimate responsibility. Peter Ainsworth, the Shadow Culture Secretary, criticised the appointment as "yet another example of the cronyism that pervades this government."

Mr Ainsworth, who had called for a non-political figure with business experience to take over from Mr Mandelson, asked: "In what way is Lord Falconer qualified to take on the task, other than the fact that he is a close friend of Tony Blair?"

"The announcement will do nothing to dispel public scepticism whilst risking the success of the project," Lord Falconer, 48, is married with four children and lives in Islington, North London, where his next-door

neighbour is Gary Hart, special adviser to Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor.

He is a pop music fan and, like many in their forties, his first love remains the hits of the 1960s and 1970s with particular favourites being the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. His party trick is to name the B-sides of almost any hit in the early 1960s.

His wife Marianna, a family law barrister, said last night: "His great love, undoubtedly, is pop music. He is stuck on the old hits like so many who grew up in the 60s and 70s."

"But we have young children and there is nothing he cannot tell people about the Spice Girls and other new groups."

She said that her husband liked music by groups such as the Rolling Stones, Beatles and Beach Boys. Lord Falconer is also a regular theatre goer and visits the opera "regularly but infrequently", according to his wife.

His last two visits to the theatre were over Christmas to see *Peter Pan* at the Eden Court theatre in Inverness and *Dick Whittington* at the Theatre Royal in Nottingham.

Lord Falconer, Charlie to his friends, is one of the Prime Minister's closest confidants having first met Mr Blair when they were schoolboys in Edinburgh more than 30 years ago.

They have remained the closest of friends, working as barristers in different chambers in the same building in London and sharing a house in Wandsworth, southwest London. Lord Falconer and his wife dine regularly with the Blairs.

He was earning a reported £500,000 a year as a barrister but gave up his lucrative commercial practice for a peerage and a much lower government salary after the 1997 general election. He became Solic-

itor-General and then in last summer's reshuffle inherited Mr Mandelson's job as Minister without Portfolio at the Cabinet Office.

One official said: "He is a lovely man to work for. He works hard but it is great fun. There is no side to the man. His shirt is often hanging out of his trousers."



Family man: Lord Falconer with his wife, children, father and stepmother on the day he was sworn in as Solicitor-General

'Red Dawn' rewarded for her loyalty

Roland Watson on a radical's rise to the post of Paymaster General

FEW have made the transition from left-wing rebel to loyal Minister of the Crown as smoothly as Dawn Primarolo, the new Paymaster General. Less than eight years ago the Bennite "Red Dawn" was standing in Bristol Magistrates' Court defending her right not to pay the poll tax, and receiving a liability order for her trouble.

Today, as she spends her first full day as the most important Treasury minister outside the Cabinet, repetition of the story still irks her but has done nothing to halt her steady rise through the ranks. Few were tipping her to fill the post made vacant by the resignation of Geoffrey Robinson before Christmas, but Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, values loyalty above all other political attributes and Ms Primarolo has been loyal to a fault.

She may have betrayed her frustrations in private, and when her parliamentary private secretary, Mick Clapham, resigned as part of the revolt against cuts to single mothers' benefits, many saw her own unease in his action.

But the woman who built part of her early reputation for outspokenness around her support of single mothers' rights went out in public to defend the cuts.

Ms Primarolo is only the third woman to hold the post of Paymaster General. She follows in the footsteps of Judith Hart, later Baroness Hart of South Lannock, who held the job from 1988 to 1999, and of Shirley Williams, later Baroness Williams of Crosby, who held it from 1976 to 1979.

Those who knew Ms Primarolo in Bristol in the mid 1980s say that her transformation has been remarkable.

She served as Tony Benn's constituency secretary while also a member of the now-defunct Avon County Council. After Mr Benn was shunted out of a parliamentary seat by his fellow Labour MP, Michael Cooks, later Baron Cooks of Harcliff, through a boundary reorganisation, Ms Primarolo exacted the left's revenge five years later, although it took her four ballots to oust Mr Cooks and become the MP for Bristol South.

Born in Bow, East London, she had moved to Bristol with her first husband and their son. She initially turned her back on higher education, preferring to take a secretarial course and start work, but later took a degree in politics and economics at Bristol University. She separated from Michael Primarolo, a teacher, in 1983, and has since married Ian Ducat, a Bristol-based union official.

Chippy and engaging in private, she has learnt the value of relative silence in public and chooses her words carefully in the few media interviews she gives.

And since joining the Labour front bench as a health spokeswoman in 1992, later to be transferred into Mr Brown's shadow Treasury team in 1994, there have been precious few signs of her rebellious past.

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Butlin's welcome awaited Cold War evacuees

A SECRET plan to send thousands of Americans to Butlin's holiday camps before evacuating them from Europe in the event of war with the Soviet Union has been revealed in documents released under the 50-year rule.

More than 30,000 American citizens were to be shipped to the US under Operation Whizzbang, an evacuation blueprint drawn up by British and American officials as tension with the USSR grew before the Berlin airlift in 1948.

About 10,000 Americans living in Britain were to leave on merchant ships and US Navy vessels within days of a conflict breaking out. A further 23,000 from continental Europe, though not occupied Germany, were planned to follow. Holding camps for the European evacuees were to be set up in holiday resorts around Britain, with Butlin's camps at Pwllheli in North Wales and Ayr in Scotland earmarked to house 9,000 people.

Operation Whizzbang was first conceived by naval attachés at the US embassy in London to evacuate only those Americans living in Britain. It was later extended to cover northwest Europe after investigations found that a direct evacuation from France or the Netherlands would be impractical.

The proposal to use Butlin's camps came from R. K. Jago, a civil servant at the Ministry of Works, who suggested the idea to the top-secret Anglo-American group that developed the plans. Camps, he argued, would be more practical than hotels, which would prove hard to staff.

"If the emergency arose during the summer months when the camps were open, there

Mark Henderson
on the holiday camp send-off arranged for 33,000 departing Americans

would be no difficulty in arranging to earmark two of them, complete with staff," a minute of the second group meeting said.

"If the emergency arose during the winter when the camps were closed, it could either be arranged with Mr Butlin or the camps requisitioned and arrangements made for the National Service Hostels' Association to do the running of the camps.

"[Mr Jago] felt the holiday camps would be ideal in that they were already equipped and arranged for catering for large numbers of people at one time, and would have the advantage that whole trainloads could be made up from one centre to go to any port."

The Ayr and Pwllheli sites were chosen for their proximity to the ports of Greenock and Liverpool. To cater for evacuation via Southampton and Plymouth, a list of smaller camps along the south coast that would hold another 13,000 was drawn up.

The plan was approved in the autumn, and the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, was informed in December 1948. Details were kept "top secret", and British officials even vetoed the idea of involving the Republic of Ireland for fear of a leak. The Foreign Office was

not told about Whizzbang until almost everything was in place, and FO officials complained to the Cabinet Office and the US Embassy about being kept in the dark.

Britain also warned Commodore Shelley, the US naval attaché, that any leak "could hardly fail to have a bad effect here and on Anglo-American relations".

London, home to 40 per cent of the Americans in Britain, was to be the "nerve centre" of the operation. Non-American dependents would have been eligible for evacuation, but able-bodied men would only have been allowed to leave once there was no more they could do to help to move out women, children and invalids.

America later tried to get Britain to agree to include 31,000 citizens from occupied Germany, but Britain felt this was impractical and asked for a French port to be considered.



Riverside romance: Abigail Wilkinson and David Wielders on their wedding day

Tourist marries her 'Crocodile Dundee' rescuer

By A CORRESPONDENT

A BACKPACKER from Birmingham has married her own "Crocodile Dundee" after he rescued her from a crocodile-infested river in the Australian outback.

Abigail Wilkinson's dramatic meeting with her husband-to-be, David Wielders, happened while she was on a canoeing trip at Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia. The 24-year-old lawyer capsize and Mr Wielders, a cattle station worker from Fremantle, saw her struggling towards the shore and pulled her to safety.

They were married four months later in the village of Humpty Doo before heading for Darwin, capital of the Northern Territory. They are now continuing their travels and hope to visit the Solomon Islands in the next couple of months.

Speaking yesterday from the family home in Solihull, West Midlands, Ms Wilkinson's father, Peter, said that

his daughter had telephoned him an hour before the wedding to get his blessing.

"I admit that it came as a bit of a shock," he said. "But she is a very sensible girl who has her head screwed on. She became disenchanted with her life in Birmingham and decided to do some travelling though she had no intention of getting married."

"She met David after tumbling into the water while she was canoeing. The last thing she saw before going under was a sign saying 'Beware of the Crocodiles'."

"Luckily her 'knight in shining armour', who was with a separate group, had seen what had happened and rescued her. It was love at first sight."

He added that his daughter had also fallen in love with Australia and he did not believe that she and her new husband would live in England.

Colonial attack on 'lazy' Jamaicans

By MARK HENDERSON

THE colonial governor of Jamaica during the Second World War condemned the Caribbean island's inhabitants as lazy, intolerable and unreasonable, according to a newly released document from 1940.

The scathing attack by Sir Arthur Richards, who singled out local politicians for particular abuse, was made in a letter to Lord Lloyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The island was "a headache", Sir Arthur wrote, because "the Jamaican is so intractable and intolerable, with very few exceptions white or black. The Jamaican envies

and hates success whether in his fellows or imported officers whom he hates anyway".

Proposals for democratic reform put forward by the nationalist leader Norman Manly were a non-starter, he said, because of "the lack of any decent material other than Manly himself".

Jamaican politicians fell into three categories: "disgruntled failures whose laziness or incompetence have denied the position they have come to occupy"; "rabid communists, largely inspired by the hatred of the white man"; or "pure theorists with no practical knowledge at all".

Teeth alert for cancer children

By OUR MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

MANY children with cancer run an extra, life-threatening risk by not having regular dental checks, researchers say.

Chemotherapy causes a range of mouth problems and cancer makes children more prone to dangerous infections.

Research was carried out on 60 children with cancer aged between one and 14 being treated at the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.

The survey, published in *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, found abnormally high levels of tooth decay, with 21 needing urgent treatment and five others with some problems. All the children were reviewed and their teeth inspected at outpatient clinics.

The families and medical teams were reluctant to go outside the hospital service on which they had become reliant. Hospital dental services are largely limited to emergencies and extractions.

□ Dentists who treat at least three quarters of their patients on the NHS say they have greater job insecurity and less job satisfaction than colleagues who take on more private work, according to a British Dental Association poll.

Hospital shops pose drug risk

By IAN MURRAY MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

HOSPITAL shops are failing to restrict sales of over-the-counter medicines despite the threat of overdose by patients.

A survey in the *Psychiatric Bulletin*, published today, found that an emphasis on commercial rather than clinical considerations was behind the lack of adequate sales restrictions.

The survey of 73 hospitals found that 20 had shops that stocked over-the-counter medicines that would be dangerous in overdose or could interfere with existing treatments. The drugs contained in the remedies included paracetamol, aspirin and ibuprofen.

Fifteen of the 20 hospitals had psychiatric wards. At three of these, patients had taken overdoses of medicines bought from the shops but the hospitals went on selling the drugs afterwards, although with restrictions.

The report, by David Somerfield of Cosham Hospital, Bristol, said that shop managers were more used to commercial considerations, so it was not surprising that the dangers of selling medicines to inpatients were not always identified.

Fourteen of the 20 shops had sales policies in place, but only one shop had devised a robust system to restrict sales, Dr Somerfield said. Most of the policies could be overcome by the determined patient.

Dr Somerfield said the best policy would be to restrict all sales to staff carrying identification or, more simply, to prohibit medication sales entirely.

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US hides fear at threat to strong dollar

THE Clinton Administration has greeted the launch of the euro with a cautious enthusiasm that belies the problems the project may present for the United States and for its relations with Europe.

"If it works, then it will be a good thing" has been the official line — a scrupulous agnosticism with a warm gloss, repeated this week as the euro started trading. "If it works in part or in whole, Europe will be stronger economically, and a stronger Europe is fundamentally good for the US," said Robert Shapiro, Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs.

American support has been fuelled by a desire for Europe to manage the region's policies more harmoniously, and by a widespread perception that European leaders run to the United States for military help when trouble breaks out. "We've sorted out four wars for them — World War I, World War II, the Cold War and Bosnia," one Administration official has said.

American businesses have also been boisterous cheerleaders for monetary union. They expect that it will make it easier for them to market their products across borders. They will have to hedge against the

Europe's world role in balance, writes Bronwen Maddox in Washington

risk of currency movements in one currency, not eleven.

America's manufacturers also see Europe as a fortress of companies that may be dominant in their well-protected local markets, but are less competitive than their US rivals. The end of currency fluctuations will expose companies trying to sell at high prices, and favour those whose products are cheaper. US companies argue.

They have the advantage of honing competitive skills and efficiency across 50 states, in a market of more than 250 million people. But, as dozens of US banks and retailers will testify, they have repeatedly misjudged how to break into the European market.

But behind the optimism, benevolence and goodwill, is a wide vein of unease. Officials are concerned that, if the euro is successful, it will lure capi-

tal away from the dollar — the world's dominant currency for half a century — which now accounts for nearly 60 per cent of global capital reserves.

That is about four times as much as the European currencies together, even though the economic output of euroland is close to that of the US.

If the euro began to change that balance, the shift could push up the cost of borrowing dollars for the US Government and companies.

The Wall Street Journal declared that, with the euro's launch, "Europe has thrown down the first postwar challenge to the US dollar's dominance of international trade and finance. The advent... of EMU doesn't just change the world's financial landscape," it argued, "it also could alter the global balance of power".

If the project begins to unravel, it could distract Europe's attention from world problems, making it more incoherent and even less cohesive as a political bloc, officials fear. America could then be left alone to fight the new "financial war" of the Asian economic crisis.

Letters, page 17
Business, page 23
Commentary, page 25

LIVING WITH THE EURO



Gerrit Zalm gets a sticky greeting as he enters the Amsterdam stock exchange to watch the start of euro trading yesterday. He was not amused.

Custard pie start on trading floor

FROM CHARLES BREMMER IN BRUSSELS

WHILE traders began working with the European Union's new world currency yesterday, a band of Dutch pranksters won global coverage for themselves by shoving cream tarts in the face of their Finance Minister.

Gerrit Zalm, a leading figure in the EU finance council, lost his usual sense of humour when he was attacked as he walked into the Amsterdam stock exchange to watch the

euro's first business day. "This is incomprehensible... an anti-democratic action," said Mr Zalm as he wiped whipped cream off his face.

The attack was claimed by a local group calling itself TAART (a Dutch acronym for Against Authoritarian Anti-Revolutionary Characters). Its leaflet said that the "festive action" was intended to underline the "megalomaniac and anti-democratic" nature of the single currency. TAART attacks on celebrities are a staple practice of anarchist pranksters in Belgium and The

Netherlands. The last prominent victim was Bill Gates, the Microsoft chairman hit by a pie in Brussels last year.

The only other hiccup to the smooth launch of the euro yesterday came when the European Commission yielded to the Bank of England and decreed that the plural form of the euro in English would end with an "s". The Commission had ruled that, for simplicity's sake, the euro would have no plural form in the EU's 11 official languages. However, the Bank of England, the City and the Irish Republic

have all been writing "euros". Commission officials were musing on the irony of being forced to change by the one big country outside monetary union.

Officially suspended: Relations between the Commission and the European Parliament were soured further yesterday after the Brussels executive confirmed that it had suspended Paul van Buiten, a Dutch finance inspector in the Commission's financial control unit, who reported to the Parliament about alleged fraud and cover-ups by Commission officials.

Money that is easier to receive than to give

BY ALAN HAMILTON

TO HARRODS for half a Vieux Boulogne cheese, armed with €100 in travellers' cheques. They get offered every currency under the sun in Knightsbridge: surely they would not turn a hair at dealing with this latest arrival.

Euros were easier to acquire than to dispose of in London yesterday. An American Express bureau de change in the City offered them at £73.38

including commission, and a free warning that they might be tricky to get rid of.

Not much good for cheese, certainly. Harrods' cheese lady took it remarkably well when offered a €50 travellers' cheque (£36) in payment for the €4.50 cheese. "We can do it, sir, but it's a bit complicated. You'll have to go to the accounts office on the fifth floor, and it will take you the best part of half an hour." Vieux Boulogne is best not

over-matured, so we bottled out with cash. Across the street to the Hyde Park Hotel, bedecked with French and German flags, to test the euro as payment for a £360-a-night double room. They had not seen one before, but were the soul of smooth. "Of course we would accept it, sir, but we would have to have it converted into sterling first: we could, of course, do that for you."

An £8 taxi fare across town was bound to be trouble. Try offering a genuine Bank of England £50 note to a cabbie, and he will doubt your sanity and parentage. "Wouldn't touch it mate: wouldn't know what to do with it. Ain't ya got plastic?"

At last Marks & Spencer, Eurostore par excellence, at Finsbury Pavement in the City in the middle of their January sale. A £20 cotton shirt beckoned. The manageress consulted a volume of paper, it being the first example of the beast

she had seen. "No problem sir, that will be £28. Yes, of course we accept euro travellers' cheques: our tills are all geared up for them, and you shall have your £30 change in sterling."

The sales assistant, Molly Ferguson, smiled charmingly. "That's fine, sir, no problem at all. Now, as it's a travellers' cheque, may I just see your passport?"

Ah. Um. Do you take Switch?



Alan Hamilton buys a shirt with euros at M&S

Gaullist rebel defies federal steamroller

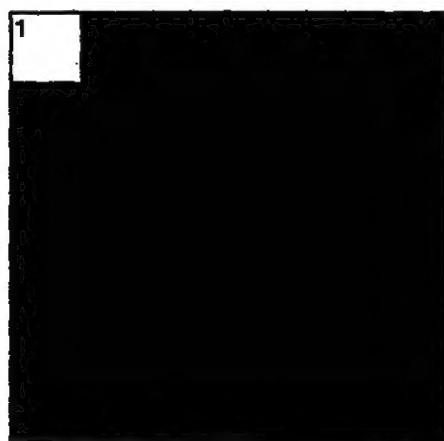
FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

CHARLES PASQUA, 71, the former French Interior Minister, will lead his own Eurosceptic list in the forthcoming European elections to campaign against the development of a federal Europe.

M. Pasqua's decision to try to defend French sovereignty was a major act of rebellion by

the veteran Gaullist, a central RPR figure for more than 20 years. He quit his place within the party leadership on the euro's launch. "We are abandoning both the frame and another slice of our national sovereignty," he said. "This new step towards a federal Europe, which I oppose, must not be done on the quiet and in defiance of what the people believe."

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Punjab hail of bullets kills 16 in mosque

FROM KATHY GANNON IN ISLAMABAD AND KHALID TANVIR IN MULTAN

GUNMEN opened fire on Shia Muslims as they knelt in prayer at a mosque in eastern Punjab province yesterday, killing 16 people and wounding at least 25 others. Injured worshippers crawled to loudspeakers to plead for help. As many as 13 victims are believed to be critically hurt.

People struggled to find transport to get the wounded to the nearest hospital, about 12 miles away. Motorised rickshaws, horse-drawn carts and cars and buses were all commandeered.

Many of the seriously hurt were taken to Nishter hospital in Multan, about 24 miles away. There a state of emergency had been declared and hundreds of Shia and Sunni Muslims gathered to give blood to help the victims.

Witnesses told of neighbours rushing to the mosque, grabbing small children and elderly men, cradling the dead and comforting the wounded. "Blood was splattered all over the floor of the mosque," said a shaken Ehsan Karim, who runs a small roadside restaurant near by. "The wounded and the dead — all seemed to be piled on each other."

No one has taken responsibility for the killing, but police suspect rival Muslim militants. Witnesses said that the attack in Shah Jamal, about 180 miles south of the eastern Punjab provincial capital of Lahore, happened as worshippers were finishing morning prayers that marked the beginning of their day-long Ramadan fast.

"I heard the firing and then

I heard people on the loudspeaker saying 'help me'. They were the wounded," said Ahsan Karim Shah, owner of a nearby hotel.

Tareen Buz, among those injured, described how the attackers came from behind. "We all were praying when bullets started hitting us from the back," he said at Nishter hospital. "I was hit by bullets and then fell unconscious... I don't know what happened afterwards." Some witnesses said the attackers fired as they sped past on motorcycles. Others described seeing three masked men speed away from the scene after the shooting. In the federal capital, Islamabad, Government and Opposition condemned the attack. (AP)

Leading article, page 17



An Israeli security officer questions a Palestinian boy in Hebron yesterday

Hebron sealed off as gunmen wound settlers

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

CLASHES erupted in the divided West Bank town of Hebron yesterday after suspected Palestinian gunmen opened fire, wounding two Jewish women, one seriously.

Israeli troops sealed off the town after the attack and imposed a curfew on the 20 per cent of Palestinian residents in its centre. After the closure, fighting broke out and Israeli soldiers fired rubber-coated metal bullets at stone-throwing Palestinians youths, hitting one boy aged 13 in the head and another in the hand.

The two Israeli women were shot in their car as they drove near the Tomb of the Patriarchs — the traditional resting place of Abraham and Sarah and a shrine that is holy to both Muslims and Jews.

David Bar-Ilan, the senior adviser to Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, condemned the shootings, saying that they made a mockery of the peace accords under which Palestinians and Jews were to refrain from violence. Witnesses said the women,

from the adjacent Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, were on their way to work in Hebron when gunmen opened fire on the vehicle. "I came here and I saw the car riddled with bullets," said Mrs Orit Struk, one of about 400 Jewish residents who live and study in Hebron, surrounded by more than 100,000 Palestinians.

Although Hebron is now under Palestinian self-rule, Jewish residents are protected by Israeli soldiers under an 1997 agreement that, in effect, divided the town.

Noam Arnon, a Hebron Jewish settler leader, said the latest attack was more evidence that the Israeli Government should never have given security control over most of the city to the Palestinians.

The latest violence comes as negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are frozen. Mr Netanyahu refuses to hand over more West Bank land until the Palestinians meet five conditions, including ending threats to declare an independent state in May.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Serb party expels chosen leader

Banja Luka: Brano Milijus, the Bosnian Serb Prime Minister-designate, has been expelled from his party three days after he was nominated by hardline President Popasen of the country's Serb entity. But Mr Milijus dismissed the decision. The Independent Social Democrats are led by the incumbent Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, backed by the West. The West claims that the plan to nominate Mr Milijus came from President Milosevic of Yugoslavia. The opposing hardline and moderate Bosnian Serb blocs each control about 30 seats in parliament and Mr Dodik has ruled with the support of Muslim and Croat MPs. (Reuters)

Israel deports cultists

Pesah Tikva, Israel: Israel ordered the deportation of 11 Americans suspected of being members of a cult plotting violence to mark the millennium and hasten the Second Coming of Jesus. The leader of the Denver-based Concerned Christians, Monte Kim Miller, who has prophesied that he will die on the streets of Jerusalem this year, was not in Israel, police said. (Reuters)

Sihanouk trial pledge

Phnom Penh, Cambodia: King Sihanouk said he would give up his royal immunity to appear before any tribunal to judge the Khmer Rouge. But prospects for a tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders for genocide looked dim with the comrades of Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, who defected late last month, indicating they would resist any attempts to take them for trial. (Reuters)

DiCaprio film threat

Bangkok: People living in Phi Phi Island National Park threatened to sue Twentieth Century-Fox and Thai officials for "destroying a fragile eco-system" to make a film starring Leonardo DiCaprio, left. Coconut trees have been planted, and dunes shaped, to make the film — an adaptation of Alec Garland's cult novel, *The Beach*. (AP)

Bus hit by rocket

Mogadishu: At least 28 people were killed and ten wounded when an anti-tank rocket hit a bus near the southern Somali town of Baidoa. The attack was by the Rahanwein Resistance Army, which denied only civilians were on board and accused gunmen of firing on a checkpoint manned by the RRA, in conflict with the warlord Hussein Mohamed Aidid since 1995. (AP)

Jail convoy ambushed

Johannesburg: Armed men in Soweto ambushed a police convoy, killing two policemen and enabling 21 prisoners who were being taken to court to escape. Four of them surrendered. Twenty prisoners broke out of Johannesburg jails over the Christmas holiday, but prison authorities say that they have cut escapes: there were 480 last year compared with 1,069 in 1997. (AP)

Goldminers trapped

Jakarta: Nine illegal goldminers died and another 21 were missing after heavy rains set off a landslide at an Indonesian government-owned mine. It was the third fatal landslide since July at Pangkor mine near Bogor, about 50 miles southeast of here. Twenty people died in the other accidents. On Saturday, wooden props at an entrance collapsed, trapping miners inside. (AP)

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| Interest paid monthly | 3.50% | 3.10% | 3.00% |
| £1 to £100 | 4.10% | 3.80% | 3.50% |
| £100 to £2,000 | 4.50% | 4.10% | 4.00% |
| £2,000 and over | 4.50% | 4.10% | 4.00% |
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| Previous Rate | | New Rate | |
| AER | AER | Gross %p.a. | |
| Credit Interest | 0.50% | 0.30% | 0.30% |
| Interest paid quarterly | 0.50% | 0.30% | 0.30% |
| £1 to £2,000 | 4.10% | 3.80% | 3.50% |
| £2,000 to £10,000 | 4.50% | 4.10% | 3.80% |
| £10,000 to £50,000 | 4.50% | 4.10% | 3.80% |
| £50,000 and over | 4.50% | 4.10% | 3.80% |
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| AER | AER | Gross %p.a. | |
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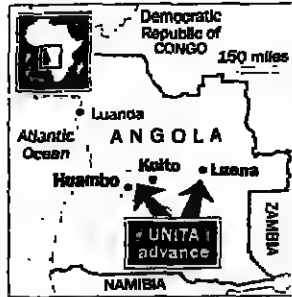
Thousands at risk in siege by Unita forces

By SAM KILEY
AFRICA CORRESPONDENT

THOUSANDS face starvation and death after the United Nations suspension of flights to parts of Angola.

The UN action, ordered after two of its aircraft were shot down, has sparked fears that Unita rebels intend to overrun towns held by the Government and sheltering hundreds of thousands of refugees. The UN for the Total Independence of Angola appears ready to sacrifice thousands of civilian lives in its attempts to take Huambo as well as Luena in the east and Kuito, which is under siege.

The UN aircraft were shot down near Huambo, in the centre of the country, which has been under heavy attack by Unita for the past few weeks. It emerged yesterday that the son of the missing



pilot of the first crashed aircraft was on board the second plane. Hilton Wilkinson, 25, was in Angola helping to find his missing father when his UN flight was shot down on Saturday. His father, John Wilkinson, has been missing since his UN C130 with 13 other people on board crashed in the same area on Boxing Day.

An aid worker in Luanda said yesterday: "There are about 150,000 residents and

another 100,000 refugees who are in desperate need of food and medicines in Huambo. If we are unable to reach them, the chances are that they will perish."

Huambo is close to the headquarters of Dr Jonas Savimbi and his rebels at Andolo and Bailundo.

Unita, rearmed and retrained under the noses of the UN's observers since 1994 when Dr Savimbi pledged to demobilise his private army, has launched an offensive on a bewildering number of fronts.

Aided, according to security sources, by retired white South African generals acting as "mercenary consultants", Unita's fronts have closed in on Kuito and are starting to throw a noose round Luena. Cut off from ground supply lines by the rebels, hundreds of thousands of civilians face daily bombardment by Uni-



John Wilkinson, left, the South African UN pilot missing in Angola, and his son Hilton, who is also missing

ta's long-range artillery and mortars. In 1993, Kuito was reduced to rubble during a six-month siege that killed thousands of people and resulted in international outrage.

Now that Unita has been blamed for shooting down two UN aircraft, it is clear that Dr Savimbi has lost interest entirely in making friends externally. Rather, he has opted to



frighten aid agencies out of the sides, which leaves the government troops and civilian populations at his mercy.

There have also been reports that his men have been murdering priests, teachers, administration officials and other educated people in the east of the country in what one security source described as a "Pol Pot-style Year Zero".

Combat role for women

By ROGER MAYNARD
IN SYDNEY

THE prospect of Australian women being ordered into hand-to-hand combat alongside men came a step closer yesterday after the Chief of the Defence Staff agreed that women could no longer be excluded from the front line.

But Admiral Chris Barry's views were condemned by old soldiers' organisations they said women did not have the physique to serve in such roles.

Bruce Ruxton, president of the Returned Services League in Victoria, said that such a move would be unacceptable to most Australians. "It would be a sad day if this country started to let women into the front line they just couldn't cope with the infantry," he said.

Colonel Keith Johnson, Director-General of Public Affairs for the Australian Defence Force, moved to play down the row, saying that deploying women in combat roles was still some time away.

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THE TIMES

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SEE THE BACK PAGE OF SECTION ONE FOR TODAY'S TOKEN
CHANGING TIMES

Fatwa dampens Saudi rulers' celebrations

By MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

SAUDI ARABIA'S top religious leader has dealt a blow to the country's elaborate preparations for the centenary of the ruling dynasty by issuing a fatwa condemning the proposed celebrations as heresy.

Mufti Abdul Aziz Abdullah Ibn Baz, the senior religious leader, said the plans for the extensive festivities later this month to mark the 100th anniversary of the capture of Riyadh by Abdul Aziz al-Saud, founder of the kingdom, were an imitation of non-believers.

Pamphlets circulating in Riyadh underlined the reservations of the conservative religious establishment to the elaborate festivities. Riyadh was captured in 1902, and the centenary falls this year according to Islamic lunar calculations. Saudi Arabia was formally founded in 1932 by Ibn Saud, who unified most of the Arabian peninsula, and all its subsequent Kings have been his sons.

The intensely conservative Muslim establishment of the central region, including Riyadh, recognises only two festivals: Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha, commemorating the sacrifice of a ram by Ibrahim, the prophet known to Jews and Christians as Abraham.

Saudi Arabia is making much of the anniversary, and in the next two months has organised a series of ceremonies and public celebrations to which the country's civil and religious leaders as well as foreign guests have been invited.

In Riyadh a big construction project will celebrate Saudi history at a cost of some £100 million. It aims to restore cultural, economic and administrative activities, and revive archi-

ture in an area that has suffered from economic and physical decay. It will include a new national museum, a landscaped park, renovated mud buildings and a new library and auditorium.

The opposition of conservatives to these secular celebrations has already forced the Government to tone down the festivities. Decorations and coloured lights have been removed from the shops. The Government has also cited the celebrations as a reason for pulling out of the Asian Games in Thailand.

'Decorations and coloured lights have vanished from shop windows'

The Saudi Government is extremely sensitive to criticism by senior Muslim clergy, but has taken tough measures to suppress the fundamentalist preachers, especially around Riyadh, who have denounced the ruling family and criticised Saudi Arabia's friendly relations with the West.

The fatwa, first issued three years ago by the Grand Mufti, also condemns the holding of birthday parties and exchanging presents on events such as birthdays or the opening of shops and schools. The same applied to companies and institutions marking anniversaries. Copies have been stuck on walls and at the entrances to mosques in the past week.

Death row Filipino wins a reprieve

FROM ABBY TAN
IN MANILA

A RAPIST condemned to die was saved at the eleventh hour yesterday by a Philippines Supreme Court decision to postpone the execution.

provoking an angry response from President Estrada, but delighting opponents of capital punishment.

The court order suspended the execution of Leo Echegaray, a house painter, until June 15 in response to a petition by his lawyers on the ground that legislators wanted to debate the death penalty.

Hundreds of death row prisoners who had been holding a prayer vigil for two days erupted into applause when the news came, three hours before he was due to die. Priests praying at a makeshift chapel 500 yards from the execution chamber jumped in the air.

Nuns and activists burst into a religious song, their eyes brimming with tears. His wife of a week, Zenaida, fainted.

Earlier, Echegaray had broken down and cried re-



Echegaray, wept in the execution chamber

peatedly while confessing to a priest and hearing Mass in the execution chamber.

In all 864 people are on death row. Among them are three foreigners, including Albert Ernest Wilson, 46, of Kent, convicted in October of raping his 12-year-old stepdaughter. He is appealing against his conviction.

The last-minute decision aborted the country's first execution in 22 years. The death penalty was abolished in 1987 but restored in 1994 amid popular clamour after a spate of spectacular crimes, involving murders and rape.

Echegaray, 38, was sentenced for the 1996 rape of his daughter, then 11. He was to be executed by lethal injection at 3pm and had been taken to the death chamber to be prepared for the execution.

President snubs call to delay address

Iraq

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Tony takes a walk on the Wilde side

The Third Way has always led to ruin, says Michael Gove

The Third Way has claimed its third victim. Charlie Whelan, like Geoffrey Robinson and Peter Mandelson before him, has become a victim of Blairism.

The traditional approach to propriety in high places, the First Way, exemplified by Peter Carrington after the Falklands invasion, was to admit wrongdoing and resign. The Second Way, being tried by Bill Clinton at the moment, is to deny the charge and then tough it out. The Third Way, we can now see, involves a vigorous denial of any impropriety. And then resignation. It transcends traditional boundaries, not of Right and Left, but right and wrong. Not since Christmas 2,000 years ago, we are asked to believe, has there been such a massacre of the innocents.

Peter and Geoffrey did nothing wrong, but they had to go. Charlie didn't tell anyone what Peter and Geoffrey did, and in any case it wasn't, of course, wrong. But he has to go. The only people who have done something wrong are the press. Why, one hears Mr Blair sigh on the Equator, don't they just go and...

Before, however, we succumb to the temptation to sympathise with the Prime Minister we should realise that he has no one to blame but himself. Charlie Whelan may have been a warring asset ever since he was filmed by Scottish Television boasting of how he misled the press.

Nemesis may have been inevitable for the man who was, according to one No 10 source, "a little bit of a bad workman blames his tools."

The High Priest of the Third Way is himself at fault. For two things. His "project" is driven by calculation, not principle, and his Government in consequence operates as a court, not an enterprise.

The "project" to which Blair refers, and which John Prescott treats with the same wary disdain as a long-clawed Japanese crab, is easily explained. The Blairite aim is the realignment of British politics. The "project" requires Labour to win a second term and involves the adoption of the euro, the re-engineering of the constitution and the absorption of the Liberal Democrats to create a natural "centre-left" majority on continental lines.

It is both ambitious and limited. It is ambitious in that it seeks to alter the political geography of Britain as comprehensively as any Sixties planner changed the geography of our cities. But it is limited in that it does not seek, as Margaret Thatcher, Clement Attlee, or even William Gladstone did with their huge majorities, to apply consistent ideological principle to the challenges of the age. It is about entrenching a clique's hold on power, not advancing policies for the nation.

Mr Blair is, of course, aware that he should have a philosophy, much as Oscar Wilde was aware that he needed a wife. He finds it hard to be passionate about the idea, but

respectable opinion makes it necessary. And so we have the Third Way. Oscar Wilde tried that, too, neither old bachelor nor new man but something quite novel. And we know where that ended.

The Third Way in foreign policy has meant neither waging war to remove Saddam, nor constructive engagement with Iraq, but bombing him just enough to rally his people. It has meant neither ending arms exports, nor defending them, but combining their sale with lectures on ethics. Robin Cook is reduced to acting as though he were Mr Pecksniff turned pornographer.

At home it has meant neither privatising the Post Office, nor preserving its current value to the Treasury, but a spatchcock policy pitifully summed up by a man called Balls as, well, just that. It has led to a policy in Northern Ireland which leaves the Province neither wholly British nor really Irish. It is, instead, awash with armed thugs responsible last year for hundreds of unpunished mutilations. More Sicilian, perhaps, than anything else.

In this absence of a clear philosophical lead, with something to believe in, Labour politicians have tried to find someone to believe in. Factions cluster around magnates for advancement.

If you want to understand the Blair Government there is no need to engage a lobbying firm stuffed with former apparitions.

Nemesis. Just go to the library for a copy of Alison Weira's *Lancaster and York: The Wars of the Roses*. Its depiction of England under Henry VI uncannily prefigures Blair's Britain. Patronage is deployed by unscrupulous barons to develop their "affinities" of followers. A premium is placed on show, and the divisions between antagonists are all the more bitter for being ideologically obscure to onlookers. Gordon Brown moves from being Blair's best monetarist buddy to John Prescott's Keynesian ally with the inscrutable ease of Warwick the Kingmaker switching from Lancastrian to Yorkist.

Lowlier ministers concentrate not on developing policies for the good of the people, but currying favour with a magnate to keep hold of office. How else can one explain the persistence in office of Alan Meale? This minister, who has made headlines with his free-lance lobbying for curious businessmen, is in office only because of his friendship with John Prescott. The last reshuffle may have seen off some Brownies, but how else, other than loyalty to the Chancellor, can one explain the continuance in office of Dawn Primorolo, or Doug Henderson?

The facile will say that Mr Whelan had to go because his personality obscured the message. But there is no message. There are only personalities, trying to find the Third Way to the Second Term. But without First Principles.

Michael Gove at the-times.co.uk



"WHERE'S THE SPIN DOCTOR WHEN YOU NEED ONE?"

A note to the head

In a daft debate about the Blair children bunking off lies a more serious issue

You have to hand it to us British: we keep each other entertained. Five days in, and already 1999 offers vintage candidates for Prig of the Year, Prig of the Year, and Mystery Document of the Year: all rolled up in a story of stupendous triviality and maximum Prime Ministerial embarrassment.

The prattling, of course, is the fact that during the Blair's well-earned holiday in the sun, David Hart, of the National Association of Head Teachers, decided to torpedo the escape fantasies of new year travel supplements by condemning parents who "damage their children's education" by taking a family holiday in term-time. Whereon the Education Secretary, who should have better antennae, echoed this headmasterly grumble and promised to learn hard on the travel industry over term-time cheapies.

Well, we are all a bit nervous of headmasters, so the media response was muted. The back row merely muttered that cheap deals are the only hope for some families, that teacher-training days constantly sabotage working parents, and that most employers ration staff holidays in August, so that a two-career family may never get one. And what about those who work in the tourist trade? Do they never get a family break? Yet even with all this muttering, there seemed to be a general sullen consensus that OK, the brats should be in school.

The only paper to swing its handbag with any real conviction was *The Independent*, which printed a magnificent leader saying how dare these minions, these "narrow-minded bleating headteachers" lecture "free citizens" who hold the primary legal responsibility for education? Furiously, it advocated that heads taking such a line should "automatically lose any chance of the salary incentives promised them". Phew. This column does not have the espionage resources to bring you full details of which *Independent* leader-writers are planning a freebie in St Anton with little Castlemassima and Zoroaster, but you get the picture: outraged middle classes swelling up with guilty indignation, chippy heads squaring for a fight, and meanwhile Duane and Kylie's parents, who wisely ignore most public pronouncements, insouciantly booking the usual

family tanfest bang in the middle of term.

But then someone counts on his fingers, scratches his head, and realizes that — O joy! — the three Blairians will not be back from the Seychelles today to begin the arduous long state school Easter term. At this point the Prig Tendency starts competing for attention. A Downing Street spokesman says that the unfortunate children — the eldest of whom, may I remind you, is two full years away from even mock GCSEs — will "get some sleep on the plane back and be back behind their desks on Wednesday". After 12 hours on a night flight, breathing nasty air laced with faint chemical toilet fumes, are the Blairians really planning to force these children into school at 8.45am? If so, I give notice that I shall personally shop them to the NSPCC.

Mind you, the Downing Street spokes-prig was only reacting to a stronger contender for the top award, the Headmaster of the London Oratory, John McIntosh. This model of professional discretion informed newspaper reporters that "as far as I am concerned, they should be back at school on Tuesday. They have not applied for a leave of absence and it's well known we take a strong line on this." He went on, as if auditioning for the John Cleese part in *Clockwise*: "I tell parents they must observe what I call the three Hs — haircuts, holidays and homework." If one thing unites all those I have straw-pollled so far, it is the vulgar p-word word which they describe a head teacher who courts tabloid fame by incontinentally shooting off his mouth about the affairs of individual families.

Especially as the plot thickens: Downing Street claims that Mrs Blair wrote a letter about the flight problem "some time ago". Don't miss the next exciting episode: will the head remember and apologise? Will the undelivered note be found by

forensic investigators stuck to a Murreymint in Euan's satchel? Or will Note-from-Mummygate run and run, with a loyal school secretary struggling to suppress the evidence by doctoring the files, and being foiled by a whistle blowing janitor (played in the movie by Dustin Hoffman with a limp), who pulls it from the shredder and passes it to Paul Routledge before being found suffocated in the gym?

On the wider question of in-term holidaymaking, the only civilised response is to sit on the fence and throw rocks at both sides. Of course you are a fool to whisk GCSE candidates off to the Caribbean, and of course with younger children you make sure they catch up. It can be done: it often is, in fluency winter terms. But for schools — particularly state schools, with terms weeks longer than independents' — to ban all discretionary absence is both impossible and stupid.

Those parents who take it generally have good reason, financial or logistical. Most of them, I would guess, have younger children than the Blairians. Their instinct is that two weeks of united family life, foreign travel, shared adventure and outdoor exercise put enough into young minds and bodies to outweigh a minor disruption of curricular learning. Or, to descend to the particular, if the Blairians are the only place the Blair children can get their parents to themselves and relax, and Seychelles flights are awkward, the London Oratory can jump it.

Still, like all daft debates it echoes an underlying truth, especially about younger families. There is, in the early years, a secret struggle between schools and parents over who actually owns this kid. Amid all the fuss about working mothers' childcare we overlook the fact that a lot of parents feel a gut reluctance to feed an adored and appreciated child into a rigid system. It is not joy that makes us cry when our small, quirky individual is

snuffed by a grey uniform. Moreover, the age of the fragmented family makes intact ones militantly proud. "We are taking our children to France. You gotta problem, punk?"

I have to admit to a spectacular snafu in our first child's first school year. We nervously announced that he would miss the summer term to sail 1,700 miles round mainland Britain with us, and could we please borrow some Roger Red-Hat books? Friends with children at tense little pre-preps warned us that the school would go ballistic, but the headmaster of our state primary — a great man, unaccountably not yet knighted — said: "Crikey! He'll learn more doing that than we could teach him." The boy sent back weekly postcards which the class pasted to a large, wobbly outline of the UK, and returned a hero.

Five years later things had changed, with an irritating circular from the governors saying that although the LEA technically allowed for family holidays, odd days off would be put on record as "unauthorised absence" to count against the child in future life. We were planning a museum visit; glowering, I demanded why it was OK to miss school for a Costa but not for an educational day? The head advised a strategic cold: but things were changing, he explained, and something had come weirdly loose in parental attitudes to school. He was all for our kind of trip, but had to sound tough because of children being kept off on such bizarre grounds as "cousins visiting" or "birthday presents to play with". If the school didn't make threats, he said, parentally approved truancy would become routine.

Maybe this is what has alarmed David Hart into his joyless militancy. Maybe teachers now sense such general lack of respect for what they do (a contempt long fuelled by governmental and Ofsted insults) that they lash their tails and snarl back. It is all quite fascinating. Beneath the bickering and intrigue, real questions swirl: Whose child is it anyway? What really helps it to grow? Does travel broaden the mind? How much difference does a day make? Discuss.

And by the way, a tender says that Mrs Blair did write that letter. She's a lawyer. It's what they do.

comment@the-times.co.uk

Wake me up before you go, Gore

Irwin Stelzer on his American nightmare

The forecasters have had their say about the outlook for America in 1999, and we now await the inevitable revisions as reality intrudes. But some of you undoubtedly worry about the long-term prospects for the world's only superpower. For those who like to think about that, I will share a recurrent nightmare.

It is 2001 and Al Gore is being sworn in as President of the United States after obliterating his Republican opponent. Indeed, so great is voter antipathy to those who believed that a perjurer should be removed from office, the Democrats gain control of both Houses of Congress.

Gore had promised to bring an end to "humanity's assault on the Earth". In his apocalyptic book *Earth in the Balance* he had made clear to the voters that, in his view, "We must change those features of our free market... economic philosophy that we know are flawed in light of the ecological destruction they legitimise, even encourage." And change them he will. Gore immediately introduces legislation to tighten all environmental standards, even though told by his experts that the costs of compliance far exceed the benefits to be had from these regulations. American industry, saddled with a need to make billions of dollars of new investment, grumbles about becoming non-competitive, but has to comply.

The new President's antipathy to the internal combustion engine is a matter of record. He blames it for everything from the growth of the suburbs — he calls the process by which people find new homes "urban sprawl" and the "trailing of American" — to dirty air, the latter despite the fact that cleaner cars and cleaner fuels have reduced auto pollution to lowest-ever levels. So it came as no surprise that he pushed up the price of petrol by three times. No longer can Americans casually decide to hop in their cars and visit granny, or afford a plane ticket to visit her if she has moved to the Sun Belt.

Gore's election campaign was funded in good part by the trade unions, which also provided the doorbell ringers and foot soldiers that turned out the blacks, Hispanics and trade union members that provided him with his margin of victory — just as they had turned the 1998 congressional elections into a triumph for the Democrats and Bill Clinton. The new Speaker of the House, Dick Gephardt, has long been the darling of the trade unions, and is their chosen instrument for getting their way.

Gephardt calls on Gore to present his legislative calendar. Top of the list is a restriction on the importation of any goods produced in countries in which average wages fall below those in the United States; and which do not adopt the stringent environmental regulations that Gore has imposed on American businesses. The effect would be more damaging to the world economy than the Smoot-Hawley tariff that produced the Great Depression, but Gore is beholden to the unions and in no position to deny them their wish.

The next visitor is Senator Edward Kennedy, who delivered to Gore the remains of the Camelot constituency and the women's vote, over which he holds sway despite a personal history that suggests that his respect for the opposite sex is not total. Kennedy has long sought a major increase in the minimum wage and a universal healthcare plan funded entirely by taxes on employers. Gore, never as comfortable with limited government and the so-called Third Way as his predecessor, immediately agrees to back that legislation.

And then there is the Hillary problem. With Bill Clinton safely ensconced as president of a Hollywood studio, where he will make full use of all its resources, Hillary now wants something to do until a seat on the Supreme Court or in the Senate opens up. Since Kofi Annan isn't prepared to resign as Secretary-General of the United Nations to make room for Hillary, who now goes by the name Hillary Rodham, Gore parks her in his Cabinet, as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

Ms Rodham's first move is to seek an injunction against all fast-food shops, which have refused a compromise that would have allowed them to stay open if they converted to salad bars. She also declares caffeine a harmful drug, and bans the sale of coffee. This produces a run on Brazil's currency, which throws all of Latin America into recession.

Hillary then swears past sins by banning all cigars, whether used for smoking or for the less noble purpose to which her now-stranded husband put them.

That last act so personalises the nightmare — a world without cigars is hardly worth contemplating — that I wake up in a cold sweat. After all, it's only a dream. Or is it? (The part seems implausible.)

The author is a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute.

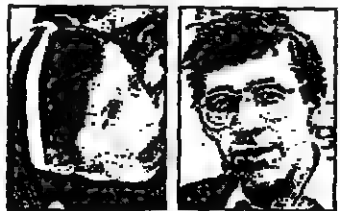
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It's a habit

SKIVING off school is spreading round the Cabinet table. Jack Straw has followed the PM's example by taking his offspring abroad during term time. Charlotte Straw (pictured left), daughter of the Home Secretary, is holidaying with her parents and brother in India, thus missing the first day of term at Pimlico School yesterday. As the three Blair babes return today from their sojourn in the Seychelles, I understand that Charlotte is not expected back for a week. "She missed biology today and is still on holiday," I am informed. Charlotte, studying for A levels, is the younger sister to William — who on the previous Christmas Eve became our most famous teenager when he made the mistake of selling marijuana to an impressively built woman who turned out to be a tabloid investigator. This prompted dear papa to march William to the police.

The purpose of the family trip, along with Mrs Alice Straw, is to set young William off on the right track during his gap year. While William may have been diverted from the hippy trail, I am sure young Charlotte's school career has not gone up in smoke. "There is a lack of understanding amongst parents and Cabinet Ministers," David Hart, a union boss, tells me. "Action needs to be taken."

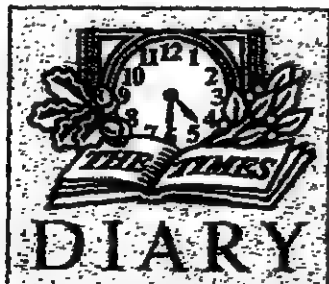
NO great loss, Charlie Whelan. So friends of Gordon Brown.



"There are seven buttons on his desk phone," I am told. "Ed Balls is on there but there's never been a button marked Charlie." Perhaps the Chancellor called his spinner on his mobile. More discreet.

Raising Caine

MICHAEL CAINE has stirred the delicate sensibilities of Leatherhead. The actor, who has swapped America for the more suburban delights of Surrey, has won plan-



ning permission to turn stables at his new pad into guest rooms (hopefully, not full of water beds, Jacuzzi, floating bars). Locals grumble that Caine's plan is "not suitable" and will set an "unhealthy precedent". Caine's letter to Mole Valley Council explained that "he has no interest in horses".

SO how did the midget formerly known as Prince spend new year? His important composition 1999 promised: "Two thousand zero zero, party over, cops, out of time / and tonight I'm gonna party like it's 1999." Instead, I am told: "Um, as far as I know he didn't really do anything New Year's Eve. Uh, no."

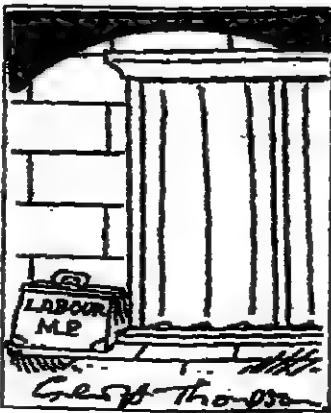
Soul mate

THE man who put ripe brie into cheesy, David Soul, is to take his

towering theatrical talent to the sunny boulevards of Britain. Soul, who played Hutch in the 1970s cop show that teamed him with a Mr Starsky, is to open at the Fringe, a bracing local night club.

In the front row will be one Antonio Fargas, alias Huggy Bear. He will not be alone. Martin Bell winces loyally: "I had dinner with David last night and, work permitting, I'm planning to go along."

ROBERT CARLYLE'S Scottish burr has been translated for his Australian cousins. Carlyle, leading trouper in *The Full Monty*, was deemed incomprehensible in Look-



"Father forgive me, for I have not sinned"

ing After Jo Jo, in which he stars as a drugs baron. "Viewers would not understand because the accents were so thick," says a corked hat at Oc TV. "We used subtitles rather than let them struggle on."

How fitting

THE Queen spent new year puzzling over a jigsaw. She was sent six examples by the British Jigsaw Puzzle Library. Its head, Pearl Crampton, chose the games. "Her Majesty likes country scenes, so I sent one called *Farm World* with lots of animals and a romantic one called *Her Hunter* of a man and woman with a horse." One popular puzzle did not make it — a picture of Diana, Princess of Wales. "I thought that one might be a bit controversial," ventures our Pearl.

JOHN PRESCOTT is to pulp the House of Commons Christmas tree to promote greenery ways. Unkind souls tell me he has nicknamed the dead tree "Peter".

Clear enough?

KIRSTY WARK, the porcelain face of *Newsnight*, is the latest target of "crony-bumbers". Ms Wark, (pictured), who sat on the panel which chose the Scottish parliament build-



ing, has been awarded £186,000 of lottery bunces towards a three-part programme she is making about the project through her production company, Wark-Clements. Willie Rennie, chief executive of the Scottish Lib Dems, says: "It is up to her to make clear that there has been no financial gain. We need absolute transparency after recent events." Ms Wark says she declared her link immediately and that she has "no further involvement in the parliament".

JASPER GERARD



STORMS AND TEACUPS

Drift is the real danger that Blair must avoid

The departure of Charlie Whelan, the Chancellor's colourful but destructive press secretary, is not likely in itself to prove of enormous consequence to the direction and fortunes of the Government. His resignation is best seen as a postscript to the dramatic events surrounding the fall of Peter Mandelson rather than a political sensation in its own right. Gordon Brown is entitled to appoint someone he trusts to represent him before the media. It would be in the Chancellor's interests, however, if that person did not unleash so much aggression on other Cabinet members.

The combination of the Mandelson affair itself and Tony Blair's absence abroad has allowed three potentially dangerous perceptions to creep up on his administration. The first is that a picture of fratricide and faction, in many quarters exaggerated, has been placed before the electorate. The second is that the entire new Labour experiment is dependent on an extraordinarily small number of people, the most central of whom, Mr Mandelson, has now left office under a cloud. The third, and most lethal, implication is that the Prime Minister's cause has been so damaged by these events that the traditionalist branch of the Labour Party, led by John Prescott in an alliance with Mr Brown, is destined to become ascendant in the year to come.

The evidence for all three assertions is, for the moment at least, less than compelling. This Government certainly contains more than its fair share of abrasive personalities and tender egos. That is perhaps not surprising after two decades of opposition and in light of the modest challenge to ministers that the Conservatives can currently muster. Mr Whelan's demise offers the Prime Minister and Chancellor to draw a line under past feuds. Mr Mandelson, for all his talents, was still more closely associated with the presentation rather than the hard policy

aspects of Mr Blair's project. His support for the single currency and electoral reform might, if followed, have led the Prime Minister into truly precarious territory.

The sense that the balance within the Cabinet may have altered and that the modernising camp within the Government has faltered is not one that the Prime Minister can let fester. Once again the sentiment sits on slim foundations. It is based on little more than a single, largely innocuous, interview with John Prescott in which some praise was offered for both John Maynard Keynes and the Chancellor. Nevertheless, there is the more tangible fear that, as the economy slows and mid-term apathy approaches, Mr Blair's resolve to press ahead with radical reforms in education and the welfare state might encounter enhanced resistance. The temptation to drop, to dilute or to defer these measures to an already somewhat cluttered second term may become overpowering. The most appealing aspect of new Labour, a willingness to entertain the idea that the proper role of the State is to do somewhat less rather than more effectively, may be smothered by what has always been its least attractive trait, an obsession with its popularity as measured by poll ratings.

It would be faintly ludicrous to suggest that a Government with a majority of 180 in the House of Commons and huge public support still behind it needs anything as dramatic as a relaunch. But the Prime Minister's low profile over the past two weeks, though understandable, has allowed uncertainty to creep into Westminster and Whitehall. If that ambiguity becomes drift and inertia, Mr Blair will have missed an important opportunity. This momentum cannot necessarily be recaptured at some convenient future moment. The Prime Minister needs to spend the next few weeks at home reasserting his personal political agenda.

PITY PAKISTAN

A wretched mess of intolerance, killings and corruption

The massacre of at least 16 Shia Pakistanis at prayer in a mosque in the Punjab city of Multan is another grim example of the religious fanaticism that is destroying government and society in Pakistan. The Sunni gunmen sprayed worshippers with bullets as they were listening to a sermon. This was a brutal response to the special anti-terrorism court, set up only two weeks ago, which has already sentenced to death 14 Sunni and Shia extremists for sectarian murders. Religious vendettas between the Sunni majority and the Shia Muslims who form a fifth of the population have claimed hundreds of lives in the past two years. But they are only one aspect of a deadly combination of lawlessness, intimidation, assassinations and corruption that has already brought this unhappy country close to political and economic collapse.

Pakistanis will look in vain to their Government to end these horrors. In addition to the sectarian conflict that affects most Muslim countries, Pakistan also suffers from the debilitating violence in Karachi between the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the organisation representing Muslims who immigrated from India after partition, and the indigenous population. The violence, which has killed most commercial initiative in this former centre of trade, is now spilling beyond city and into all local politics. It finds an echo in the clashes to the north, where heavily armed refugees from the war in Afghanistan have exacerbated tribal divisions.

Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister, has promised to crack down on terrorism. But he shows neither the will nor capacity to do so. He himself has only just escaped assassination, when a bomb exploded

under a bridge on the road to his family farm. As usual, the finger has been pointed at Indian intelligence agents; more likely perpetrators are MQM militants and political enemies who are locked in a bitter struggle with Mr Sharif.

In many ways the Prime Minister is in an enviable position. He has an overwhelming parliamentary majority. He has won the power struggle with the former President and with Pakistan's judiciary, emerging with a stronger hand than any previous democratically elected leader. The political opposition is discredited by the allegations of corruption levelled at Benazir Bhutto, her family and her cronies. But he has thrown away his advantage. He has done little to liberalise the economy, reform the country's political institutions or crack down on corruption. He has shown himself to be as venal and opportunistic as most politicians. And he appears greedy for absolute power with little idea of how to use it for Pakistan's advantage.

There is an illusion in Pakistan that because it has exploded a nuclear bomb, it commands world respect. Pakistanis believe that they will be bailed out of their largely self-made economic mess because of their strategic and political importance. In fact, the resort to nuclear testing, just like Mr Sharif's embrace of an ever more rigid Islamisation, is a populist attempt to hide the failings of his rule. Both may bring short-lived popularity. But the costs — a cut in foreign aid and growing religious intolerance — are weighing heavily on the population. The weekend upsurge of violence should be a warning to the lacklustre Government to tackle the country's enormous underlying problems.

THE PRE-MILLENNIUM BUG

Flu is best treated at home not in hospital

If life were a game of Monopoly, there would be a space marked Bed, and a Chance card, giving strict instructions: "You have flu. Move directly to bed. Do not pass Go. Do not go to hospital. Miss three goes." Sadly, many people who have been struck down by the current flu virus still need to be given such simple advice. Feverish, coughing and spluttering, they have made their way to doctors' surgeries or hospitals — some by ambulance — where they languish for hours, passing their illness on, only to be told that there is no magical cure. For most people, the best cure is simple: take a hot, sweet drink, find a good book or programme and go to bed.

Although the earliest description of an influenza epidemic was recorded in 1610, the term was first widely used in 1743 to describe what the *London Magazine* called "a contagious distemper" raging in Italy. Lord Chesterfield told his son that influenza is "a little fever, of which scarcely anyone dies; and it generally goes off with a little looseness". A century and a half later, an estimated 20 million died in the 1918 outbreak of Spanish influenza, which ranks with the Black Death as one of the severest outbreaks of diseases ever. Today, however, thanks in part to vaccinations, Lord Chesterfield's advice holds. Those most at risk are infants and the elderly, especially if they are suffering from bronchitis, pneumonia or other debilitating disorders. If they are swamped by less

deserving cases, surgeries and emergency wards might well be unable to provide this vulnerable group with the care and attention they need.

Despite the best efforts of hypochondriacs, the current outbreak of H3N2 Sydney flu is nowhere near epidemic proportions. To be classified as an "epidemic", more than 400 cases of flu per 100,000 people need to be recorded a week — five times the current level of those who have caught this pre-millennium bug. But some hospitals are already straining to cope, even though the Government is spending an extra £250 million to help to tide the NHS through any winter crisis. Patients are being treated in ambulances and serious cases shipped across the country in search of a bed. Yet lack of beds disguises the real problem. Even if there were more beds, there would not be the nurses needed to look after those resting in them.

Like teaching, nursing is a profession suffering from a retention and recruitment crisis. The exodus of qualified nurses, many of whom are being lured into the private sector by higher salaries, is putting an increasing number of hospitals — particularly their intensive care units — under immense strain. There are, overall, 8,000 nursing vacancies and, for the first time, spaces on nurses' training courses. Until the image and pay structure of nursing is overhauled, this problem — unlike Sydney flu — will not disappear.

UK candidates for Brussels posts

From Sir Roy Denman

Sir, Well before the end of this year the Government will need to decide who should be the two next British members of the European Commission. The assumption in Brussels is that Neil Kinnock will remain for a well merited second term and that Sir Leon Brittan, after 11 years, will step down.

The successor to Sir Leon could normally have been expected to be a Conservative. But the policy towards Europe recently adopted by the Conservative Party is to oppose not only British membership of the single currency for at least the next eight years but any of the further economic and political integration which will inexorably follow the euro.

Thus to send a Conservative as a European Commissioner would be tantamount to selecting a member of a league of atheists to fill the vacancy for a bishop.

Surely the sensible solution would be to appoint a leading member of the party which has for many years supported European integration. Either Paddy Ashdown or Menzies Campbell has the ability and the knowledge of European questions to make a first-class commissioner.

Yours faithfully,
ROY DENMAN
(Director-General for External Affairs, EEC Commission, 1977-82, 26 St Luke's Street, SW3 3RP, January 3).

Launch of the euro

From Mr Stan Snowden

Sir, The negative views expressed about the euro by Sir John Craven and others (letter, January 1) are understandable, but I am surprised to note that the Executive Director of the Federation of Small Businesses is among the signatories. Multinational trading conglomerates will benefit least from joining the euro. The real beneficiaries, in my view, will be small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

If we entered euroland our SMEs would enjoy access to longer-term finance at lower interest rates, as do our European competitors. This would help to lower overheads, increase competitiveness and extend the survival rate of SMEs. At present the survival rate is three years for 53 per cent of SMEs in the North West region.

Your correspondents also point out that we have the fifth largest trading economy in the world. However, and despite the fact that we also have the lowest rates of corporation tax, our living standards are among the lowest in Europe.

What is right for Europe will be good for Britain too.

Yours faithfully,
STAN SNOWDON
(Managing Director, Staffordshire Giftware Ltd, 84 Belgrave Avenue, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1HT, January 2).

From Mr Bill Cash, MP for Stone (Conservative)

Sir, Your leading article of January 2, "A German Europe", states that Germany has now abandoned her previous "conciliatory EU posture".

It always was a posture, as I indicated in my pamphlet, *British and German National Interests*, published by the European Foundation last September.

The single currency and EMU came about through the Maastricht treaty, which I warned John Major, at the time, would create an undemocratic and German Europe. He and his Cabinet allowed EMU to go ahead. In a protocol to the treaty EMU is expressed as "irrevocable". So too, therefore, is political union, for the two are inseparable.

It falls, as ever, to the British people to redeem this disastrous situation by a "no" vote in the referendum.

Yours faithfully,
BILL CASH
(Chairman, The European Foundation, 61 Pall Mall, SW1Y 5HZ, January 3).

From Dr Philip E. Roe

Sir, Why is the euro the size that it is? It is too large to function as the only unit since many things can be bought for less. But if it is divided into 100 cents the cent is too small and will not buy anything. The ideal size of a monetary unit is surely the smallest amount anyone would bother with — about 2p.

The inventors of that other inconvenient continental unit, the metre, just too long for a stride, based it on the circumference of the Earth. Does anything in nature correspond to 70p?

Yours etc,
PHILIP ROE
157 Verulam Road,
St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 4DW.
philip.e.roe@btinternet.com

From Mr John Gibbs

Sir, "Euroland" is English (report, January 4). Well, well. How did they tell? There was I thinking it was German.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN GIBBS
14 Queen Street, Maesteg CF34 9YN, January 4.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

The spirit of optimism in our 'moral wasteland'

From Mr Charles T. Ross

Sir, David Selbourne cheers up the new year by ranting our consciences at the widespread cynicism which he thinks is causing our civilisation to descend into the abyss (article extract, "Our moral wasteland", December 30).

No one can be complacent about the failures in our society which he lists, but Jeremiahs all seem to compare today's inadequacies with some mythical lost paradise of yesteryear. Take his first point about the way some old people are regarded as commodities by private care homes; this compares, not so much with a past in which every elderly couple lived in the bosom of a caring, loving, extended family, but with the terror, even in living memory, of the workhouse.

He cites the number of arson attacks on schools. Fifty years ago some 20 per cent of our children received a reasonable education — now, perhaps 70 per cent do. Of course, this is not good enough. Of course, we should encourage youngsters to try and burn down their schools?

The big shock horror is "the moral quagmire" of our divorce rate. Perhaps this level of failure should encourage us to reflect on the culture of how people are encouraged to select their partners in the first place. What might these statistics indicate about the experience of couples who for centuries were forced to live with their mistakes? Selbourne pines for the nuclear family — yet look at the weight of evidence of the stress this can cause.

In the extract you have published Selbourne offers no solutions to what he calls "moral evasion". But there is hope. In this century we have achieved universal suffrage — so we begin to influence how we are governed: deference to a static hereditary system is on the wane. We have

created the welfare state. The National Health Service may have its faults but it is a beacon of civilisation. More than half the population have jobs that give them genuine satisfaction and the percentage rises annually.

Of course there are problems, there always will be, and there is much to be done, but we go into the new millennium better fed, in better health, better clothed and housed, less superstitious and better educated to enjoy our knowledge, art and culture. We may not do it in the name of religion, but our community is increasingly tolerant, generous and compassionate.

Yours sincerely,
CHARLES T. ROSS
Mulberry House, 8 Mount Road,
Lansdown, Bath BA1 5PW,
January 1.

From Mrs Mary C. Smith

Sir, David Selbourne has given us all a salutary warning. We have switched off the engine and are freewheeling into what is fast becoming an amoral society. What else do we expect when the Christian religion has largely been thrown out of schools and the vast majority of homes?

The Christian Church has become apologetic concerning its belief, and is, in some areas of life, trying to dispense with morality altogether, blurring the divide between right and wrong.

Yours sincerely,
MARY C. SMITH
54 Eastern Road, N2 9LA,
December 31.

From Mr P. J. Riddell

Sir, While what David Selbourne writes is undeniable, I found myself wishing that he might put his formidable skills towards encouraging people. By assembling all that is

wrong, we can easily depress ourselves. But the picture should be balanced by cataloguing some of the multitude of generous and noble actions which we also encounter.

It is difficult to assess the current state of the struggle between good and evil in a particular people — one's judgment is so affected by one's own frame of mind at the time. Mr Selbourne's article stands in contrast to the spirit of this Christmas season, by marking which, we affirm our belief that however dark things may seem, there is hope — evil will not triumph. A prophet, while warning of dangers ahead, has a duty to reflect that hope, and seek to inspire people to better things.

Yours sincerely,
P. J. RIDDELL
12a Northam Road, Oxford OX2 6SF,
December 31.

From Mrs E. Wheeler

Sir, "Our moral wasteland" certainly made for thought-provoking reading. It did not surprise me that most of the quotes used by David Selbourne came from *The Guardian*. I was a devoted reader of that paper for many years until I could no longer bear the dark, debilitating cynicism which began to fill its pages. On every moral issue it took the so-called "forward-looking" trendy view.

But where did the second largest source of quotes come from? From *The Times*. Does this give you food for thought? You cannot condemn moral cynicism and social confusion and then give inches of column space to those who perpetrate them. Where will you make your stand?

Yours faithfully,
E. WHEELER
5 Goodwood Close,
Watlington, Hampshire PO8 8BG.
100531.2573@compuserve.com
December 30.

Hopes for model housing dashed

From Mr G. M. Wedd

Sir, As one of the civil servants on whom, among others, Mr Michael Moore (letter, December 30) heaps the responsibility for the Park Hill estate in Sheffield, may I express a view contrary to his, and your other correspondents?

Park Hill is highly ingenious. The way the flats wrap around the walkways and the ribbon of building is laid out so that every walkway but one reaches ground level somewhere, represents good, creative architecture.

Three things went wrong with Park Hill, as with almost all other public housing of that period. Standards were low. Ceiling heights were kept to the minimum thought necessary for health. Soundproofing was very poor; no one in the 1930s foresaw that every room in every flat would contain a TV or ghetto-blasters. Parking provision was derisory; it was thought that those who could afford a car should get out of heavily subsidised accommodation.

Of necessity, the flats were allocated to people for whom they were not suitable, rather than the young professionals or retired couples; but these latter were not at the top of the waiting list. A family with three or four young children — who will all too soon turn into three or four teenagers, chaffing at the constraints of such a lifestyle — would be far better off in a semi or terrace house.

Woodland burials

From the Director of The Natural Death Centre

Sir, Your leading article, "The dominions of death" (December 29), praises the Oakfield woodland burial ground at Wrabness in Essex and calls for more such sites. The first woodland burial ground in the UK was opened in Carlisle in 1993. Today there are 84 such grounds. It is the fastest growing environmental movement in the UK.

Our charity runs an association to link these sites and gives awards to the best. The most recent winner was the Greenhaven farm near Rugby, which charges a mere £490 for grave, tree, biodegradable coffin and collection of the body, even from as far away as London.

This brings environmentally friendly burial within the reach of those who might otherwise have chosen the more polluting option of cremation, with its often drab and rushed service.

Yours faithfully,
JOSEFINE SPEYER, Director,
The Natural Death Centre,
20 Heber Road, NW2 6AA,
January 1.

Shakespeare honoured

From Mr Michael Heilman

Sir, It was wonderful to read the significant space *The Times* devoted to Shakespeare today.

The educational system in most of the US has trivialised and reduced his work to tedium. He has been held hostage by the elite. I'm glad to see him honoured in the land of his birth.

Yours etc,
MICHAEL HEILMAN,
11546 Hickory Cluster,
Reston, VA 20190-3601.
hikmfl@erols.com
January 2.

Pain in the toe

From Dr Andrew Bamji

Sir, I have suggested for years that the common belief that gout is due to an excess of purine, among other wines (article, "Just like toothache in the big toe", Weekend, December 26), is due to the loss, probably last century, of two letters from the name of its precipitant. It is porter, not port.

Porter, of course, is beer, so Adam Edwards's switch to this beverage will undoubtedly make his gout worse. We now know that the yeasts in beer, which are broken down to uric acid, are the cause. Other foods rich in purines, red meat and yeast extract among them, are villains also.

In any event, if he was taking enough allopurinol he should not get gout at all. So I would advise eschewing beer, yeast extract and fillet steak, and stick to the wee dram now and again.

Yours spiritedly,
ANDREW BAMJI
(Consultant rheumatologist),
Greylands, 58 Godington Lane,
Orpington, Kent BR6 9DS.
andrew_bamji@compuserve.com
December 28.

That sinking feeling

From Mr Frederick King

Sir, I have an ambition (not yet realised) to tip out water from a washing-up bowl, and to find it empty. There is always a teaspoon.

Yours faithfully,
F. KING
The Barn, Chapel Allerton,
Airedale, Somerset BS26 2PH,
January 3.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Balliol protest

From Professor Emeritus W. L. Gage

Sir, Your Balliol correspondent Kate Atkinson (letter, December 30) complains, not of the principle of some student contribution, but of the timing of the payment.

The danger of the deferred graduate tax which she proposes is that students may fail to respect the assets or the cost-control procedures of their university. They may not see themselves as stakeholders.

Yours faithfully,
BILL GAGE
35 St Lawrence Drive,
Pinner, Middlesex HA5 2RW,
December 30.

Golden years

From Mr John Pullan

Sir, As I am retired and on the doorstep of drawing my old-age pension I protest at the prospect of being called a "senior" (letters, December 28 and 31).

If you are young, you are young. If you are middle-aged, you are middle-aged. If you are old, no euphemism can alter the fact.

How you feel is quite different. Yours faithfully,
JOHN PULLAN,
32 Twatling Road,
Barn Green, Birmingham B45 8HT.
jpullan9@aol.com
January 1.

The strain of the train

From Dr J. R. C. West

Sir, Mr M. R. K. Holden (letter, December 30) asks for a new slogan for British Rail in the light of "the appalling conditions many customers now endure".

After two very standard trips to Cornwall by Great Western in August I wrote to the Customer Relations Department, suggesting the change of one letter only, i.e. "Let the train make the strain".

I received a reply and compensation, but no thanks for my suggestion. Yours faithfully,
JOHN WEST,
9 Ullswater Road, Barnes, SW13 9PL,
December 30.

From Mr Jack Smith

Sir, Those of us who had a hand in the campaign in which "Let the train take the strain" was a major and very effective component are still delighted when it is resurrected from time to time. After so many years.

As a professional railwayman of over 62 years' experience, may I suggest that its successor for 1999 should be: "Come back, British Railways, all is forgiven."

Yours faithfully,
JACK SMITH,
Holturi, Hermitage Road,
Cold Ash, Newbury RG18 9JG,
January 1.

From Mr Paul Phillips

Sir, How about "Here today, still here tomorrow?"

Yours faithfully,
P. J. PHILLIPS,
16 Burns Green,
Berkington, Stevenage,
Hertfordshire SG2 7DA.
piphil@hampers.globalnet.co.uk
January 2.

SOCIAL NEWS

The Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, will open the first session of the new Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on Thursday, July 1.

Sir David Woodbine Parish

A service of thanksgiving for the life of Sir David Woodbine Parish, CBE, will be held at St Olave's, Hart Street, London EC3, on Tuesday, January 19, 1999, at noon.

Sir William Mather

A service of thanksgiving for the life of Sir William Mather will be held at St Peter's, Presbury, Cheshire, on Wednesday, January 20, at noon. Donations to the Mather Foundation for the General Hospital or the Army Benevolent Fund.

Colonel Roderick Hill

A service of thanksgiving for the life of Colonel Roderick Hill, late Coldstream Guards and formerly Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent, will be held at St Mary's Parish Church, Chepstow, Monmouthshire, on Thursday, February 11, 1999, at 11.30am. Donations to the Chepstow War Memorial Fund or to the Chepstow War Memorial Trust, Chepstow, NP23 5YH, before January 25. All are most welcome.

Mr Quentin Crewe

A memorial service for Mr Quentin Crewe will be held at St George's, Hanover Square, London W1, on Thursday, February 18, at noon.

Dinner

The Athenaeum Club, 200, Strand, will be the venue for a dinner in aid of the Athenaeum held last night at Pall Mall. The Very Rev David Edwards was in the chair.

Marriage

Mr H. Johnson and Mrs J. Griffiths. The marriage took place on Christmas Eve, at Runway Bay, Jamaica, between Mr Roy Johnson and Mrs June Griffiths.

Premium Bonds

The £1 million prize in the Premium Bond draw for January was won with 748W 260906. The winner lives in Kent and has a bond holding of £10,991.

Birthdays today

The King of Spain celebrates his 81st birthday today. The Grand Duke of Luxembourg celebrates his 78th birthday today. Mr Alfred Brendel, KBE, concert pianist, 68. Mr Tom Burke, environmentalist, 52. The Earl of Dudley, 78. Sir Alan Humphreys, civil servant, 85. Miss Diane Keaton, actress, 53. Lord Kingsdown, KG, 72. Miss Jan Leeming, broadcaster, 57. Mr Maurizio Pollini, pianist, 57. Sir Norman Price, former chairman, Board of Inland Revenue, 84. Major-General H. Quintan, 93. General Sir Michael Rose, 59. General Sir John Sibbald, 64. The Hon Mrs Alison Wright, former director-general, British Invisibles, 54. Lord Wynford, 52.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: John Burke, genealogist and founder of Burke's Peerage, 1787; King Camp Gillette, inventor of the safety razor, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, 1859; Konrad Adenauer, ex-Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany 1949-63, 11.30am. Donations to the Adenauer Foundation, 17, Welsh Street, Chepstow, NP23 5YH, before January 25. All are most welcome.

DEATHS: Edward the Confessor, King of England reigned 1042-66, 1066; Joseph Gillot, pioneer of the steel pen, Birmingham, 1873; Sir Ernest Shackleton, explorer, South Georgia, Antarctica, 1922; Calvin Coolidge, 30th American President 1923-29, Northampton, Massachusetts, 1933; Amy Johnson, aviator, on a flight across the Thames Estuary, 1941; Sonny Liston, boxer, Las Vegas, 1971.

One day when he was in the hospital, he played Australia at Melbourne because the Test match had been abandoned after the previous day's rain, 1971.

Hunting for a relic stolen from Cromwell's hearse

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

ON THE 400th anniversary of Oliver Cromwell's birth, the Museum of London is searching for the relic of arms that adorned the hearse at his funeral in 1658 and may have been stolen by a Westminster schoolboy who vanished with it into the crowd.

An account from the 1790s suggests that it is in a private collection but tracking it down has so far proved impossible. Hazel Forsyth, the museum's curator of post-medieval collections, said: "It is astonishing that any object from Oliver Cromwell's funeral has survived the vandalism and destruction of the Restoration and vicissitudes of the last 400 years. But two fragile textiles have survived, one in the Museum of London's collection; the other in private hands, present whereabouts unknown. Both were apparently taken from the hearse."

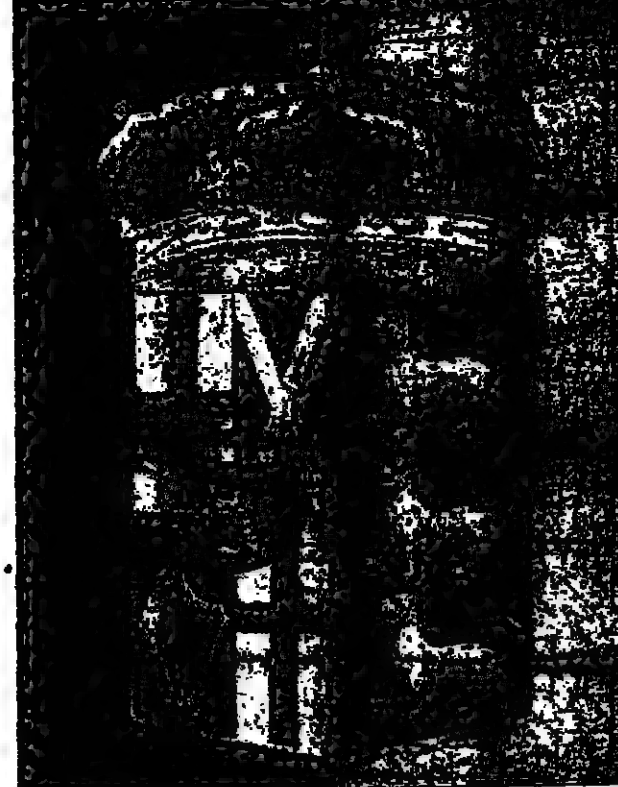
Cromwell died from a malarial infection of the spleen on September 3, 1658. His funeral was particularly lavish, costing up to £60,000, according to some estimates, at a time when the average daily wage was less than a shilling (5p). More than 2,000 esquires, shields bearing coats-of-arms in satin, taffeta (a type of woven silk) and buckram (a cotton-based fabric), were among objects that adorned the hearse and rooms at Somerset House where he lay in state for several weeks. But only two esquires are believed to have survived at the Restoration in 1661, the hearse was destroyed and Cromwell's body was exhumed, the head severed and the body cast

into a pit under the gallows. The Museum of London's taffeta esquire, acquired in 1914, bears this inscription: "Oliver Cromwell's esquire that was taken from his hearse on 23rd Nov. 1658."

Miss Forsyth said: "Until recently, it was thought that the museum's esquire had been taken from the hearse by a Westminster School boy, Robert Uvedale. The 16-year-old, in an act of bravado, darted through the legs of the guard and snatched the esquire from the bier, disappearing into the crowd before anyone could stop him. In due course, the esquire became a family heirloom, and was eventually framed. At some point a paper label with Latin inscription was fixed to the back, describing the theft, and continuing with a vituperative account of Cromwell's life and character."

However, she explained, close reading suggests that the "Uvedale" esquire is different from the museum's and that the boy's souvenir has yet to be traced.

The museum will be displaying its esquire in Cromwell: Wars and All, which will run from Friday this week to February 28, along with Cromwell memorabilia that make up the largest collection in the country: items will include a waistcoat reputedly worn by Charles I on the scaffold and two death masks. Much of it has never been seen before. The exhibition is among a series of special events which will commemorate the 400th anniversary of Cromwell's birth on April 25, 1599.



Cromwell's esquire: taken from his hearse



His brass coffin plate: stolen by an optimistic gold thief

Forthcoming marriages

Mr D.M. Benton and Miss A.H. Prais. The engagement is announced between Daniel, son of the late Dr Denis Benton and of Mrs Mary Allen, of Gloucester, and Alison, daughter of Kenneth and Rosalind Prais, of Alford, Aberdeenshire.

Mr A.J.A. Cranmer and Miss J. van Zandhoff. The engagement is announced between Alistair John Abernethy, younger son of the Rev J.A. and Mrs Cranmer, of Crawley, Hampshire, and Joanneke, younger daughter of Dr Heer and Mrs van Zandhoff-Scholten, of Bussum, The Netherlands.

Mr G.W.M. Crowdon and Miss F.M. Maudslayi. The engagement is announced between Giles, son of Mr and the Hon Mrs Peregrine Crowdon, of Oley, Suffolk, and Frances, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs Charles Maudslayi, of Pewsey, Wiltshire.

Mr S.D. Hall and Miss E. Schwarz. The engagement is announced between Simon, eldest son of Mr Derek Hall, of Barnes, London, and Mrs Jennifer Hall, of Chiswick, London, and Emma, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs Schwarz, of Childe, Oxfordshire.

Mr M.J.R. Harris and Miss E.G. Branton. The engagement is announced between Michael, son of Mr and Mrs J.K.M. Harris, of Tadworth, Surrey, and Emma, daughter of Mr and Mrs E.J. Branton, of Ditchen, Hampshire.

Mr A.T. Hodgson and Miss K. Ouse. The engagement is announced between Andrew, younger son of Mr and Mrs P.E. Hodgson, of Peterborough, and Yuko, only daughter of Mr Y. Ouse, of Tokyo, and Mrs H. Kaga, of Tokyo, Japan.

Mr R. Söderberg and Miss H. Norman. The engagement is announced between Rolf Söderberg, Swedish resident of Vienna, and Heather Norman, of London.

Mr D.M. Kay and Miss C.V. Jones. The engagement is announced between Dominic, second son of Sir Maurice and Lady Kay, of Nantwich, Cheshire, and Claire, daughter of Mr and Mrs David Henry Jones, of Deganwy, Conwy.

Mr J.O. de M. Kellock and Miss K.A. Davidson. The engagement is announced between James Oliver, son of Mr and Mrs Robert Kellock, of Old Routh Abbey, Tisbury, Wiltshire, and Karen Ann, daughter of Mr and Mrs Sven Davidson, of Kingswood, Surrey.

Mr J.R. Pugh and Miss E.J.M. Grosham. The engagement is announced between Jonathan, elder son of Colonel Oliver Pugh, of East Herts, Surrey, and Frédérique, only daughter of M and Mme Pierre Grosham, of Taron-sur-Rhône, France.

Mr T.G.J. Sherwood and Miss C.A. Vickers. The engagement is announced between Tom, son of Mr and Mrs Jack Sherwood, of Wareham, Kent, and Charlotte, daughter of Mr Douglas Vickers, of Chelsea, London, and Mrs Lena Vickers, of Leighton, Gloucestershire.

Mr R.S. Taylor and Miss A.C.I. Alder. The engagement is announced between Russell, elder son of Mr and Mrs Sam Taylor, of Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, and Anne, daughter of Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Alder, of Beverley, East Yorkshire.

Mr M.C.K. Watson and Miss D.C.G. de Saig. The engagement is announced between Michael Charles Knowlton, eldest son of Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs T.A.K. Watson, of Chesham, Wilshire, and Deborah Jane Geraldine, younger daughter of the late Rev and Mrs John de Saig.

PERSONAL

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good: his love endures for ever. Psalm 118.1 (C.V.)

BIRTHS

ATYA - On December 31st at the Portland Hospital to Mr and Mrs A. Khan, a son, Kamal, a brother for Kamila.

BAUMSTER PARKER - On 27th December at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington to Mr and Mrs Charles Parker, a son, Charles, a brother for Charles.

BAW - On January 2nd at the Portland Hospital to Mr and Mrs Baw, a son, Baw, a brother for Baw.

BLAKE - On January 2nd at the Portland Hospital to Mr and Mrs Blake, a son, Blake, a brother for Blake.

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DEATHS

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CARMICHAEL - Betty, on 21st December 1998, aged 83. Beloved wife of the late L. Col. H. R. Carmichael M.C. and the late L. Col. P. A. Carmichael M.C. Burial at St. Mary's Church, London W1. Private funeral.

DEACON - Karen Olive, 68, died on 21st December 1998. Burial at St. Mary's Church, London W1. Private funeral.

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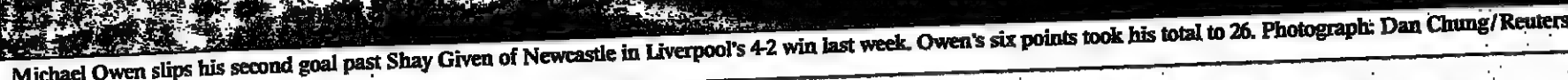
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Riedle. The most impressive individual performance of the week, however

- £50,000 to the top Fantasy League European Cup final
- £10,000 to the runner-up
- £5,000 for third place
- £1,000 monthly prizes: eight sports equipment
- £500 weekly prizes: 36 prizes equipment
- £1,000 youth prize, plus monthly

PRIZES

... manager, plus a trip for two to the

... of £1,000, plus £100 of Puma

... £500, plus £100 of Puma sports

... prizes of a Premiership football shirt

might not be a bad risk, though. Actually, I was thinking of a Wimbledon attacker. Who had you planned on signing? Well, Jason Euell, until his sending off on Saturdays; but I was also having second thoughts about him because Joe Kinnear is playing him a bit deeper this season, and I'd rather have my forward picks right up front where they can get among the goals. What about Carl

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5/1/1966

Carbone a fine catch for Tiddlers

The £1,000 prize for December is heading to North Yorkshire, thanks in no small part to 16 points from the talented Italian

December was a month of big games, outstanding individual performances and controversial refereeing decisions. Like every other month in the FA Carling Premiership, in other words. But there was the extra spice of the holiday fixtures, and the two titanic clashes between Chelsea and Manchester United.

So, what will we remember December for, and who were the Fantasy League players who made their marks on the month? Aston Villa managed to say ahead of the chasing pack despite defeat at Chelsea; they made up for it by beating Arsenal 3-2 in a thrilling come-from-behind performance and sharing the points with Manchester United. At the other end of the table, Charlton began to slide into danger, and Southampton suggested that a rally might be on until Chelsea took three points at The Dell.

Referees were predictably the fore thanks to the controversial dismissals of Michael Oakes, the Villa goalkeeper, in the defeat at Blackburn, and Patrick Vieira of Arsenal in their 1-0 win at The Valley.

Arguably the player of the month was Benito Carbone of Sheffield Wednesday, who enjoyed a purple patch in the middle of the month with goals against Nottingham Forest and Charlton Athletic, and his absence on Boxing Day was keenly felt when Leicester triumphed at Hillsborough. Carbone contributed 16 points to Tom's Tiddlers, the team chosen by the winner of the monthly prize for December, Brian Longbone of Pickering, North Yorkshire.

Pressure of work meant that Mr Longbone, a surveyor, was unable to pay as much attention as he might have liked to the progress of his side: thus news of his prize of £1,000 plus £100 worth of sports equipment was something of a surprise. "It has come as a shock," he said. "I thought I'd picked a good team, but not that good."

Mr Longbone took a methodical approach to team selection, working out how much he could afford to spend on each position. "You have a financial constraint," he said. "It might not have been the team I'd have picked if I had had free rein." Such strict financial planning was the reason behind the selection of Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, Mr Longbone's top points scorer, with 17. "£15 million for Alan Shearer would be a lot of money to tie up in one position. Hasselbaink was good value."

Mr Longbone has no particular footballing allegiance. "I just like to



| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Tom's Tiddlers | |
| E De Geay (CHE) | 21 |
| D Irwin (MAN) | 16 |
| W Taylor (NEW) | 15 |
| M Elliott (LEE) | 13 |
| R Ferdinand (WES) | 12 |
| B Carbone (SHF) | 10 |
| D Anderson (TOT) | 10 |
| P Jones (LIV) | 4 |
| M Hughes (WIM) | 7 |
| J Joachim (AST) | 8 |
| J F Hasselbaink (LEE) | 17 |
| Total points: 96 | |

see good football, and I try to identify what a good footballer should be.

In general, he avoided "controversial figures: the team is based on good quality professional players". Some might wonder about the inclusion of Warren Barton, who has played at left back for Newcastle this season, despite the admission of "Ruud Gullit, his manager, that 'he hasn't got a left foot', but the selection of Michael Hughes and Julian Joachim, both of whom have garnered rave reviews for their performances this season, shows that Mr Longbone's policy of not breaking the bank for big stars can bring success. Are you watching, Mr Vialli?

The winner of the weekly prize of £500 plus £100-worth of sports equipment, Ridwan Patel, of the University of Surrey, had Chris Armstrong of Tottenham, our player of the week and scorer of a hat-trick against Everton, to thank for nine of the 26 points scored by his team. The Superstars. Three of his four defenders (Dennis Irwin, Steve Walsh and Rio Ferdinand) managed clean sheets, while Robbie Earle and Dean Surridge came up with valuable goals.



The new Ian Wright? Chris Armstrong also left Crystal Palace for North London, and now finds himself working under George Graham, as Wright did during his best days at Arsenal. His hat-trick against Everton ensured that the Spurs revival continued; the chat-show is surely only a matter of time...

FANTASY LEAGUE TOP 100

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----|
| 1 Phil Clark | Shabadi United | 236 |
| 2 Tony Birmingham | Tony's Terrors | 228 |
| 3 Michael Langdon | Hemphroddas | 227 |
| 4 Sean Morgan | O Not Again Ref | 225 |
| 5 Nigel Kabb | Kalbs Kings 8 | 224 |
| 6 Owen Smith | Corazon Fie S | 222 |
| 7 Sean Eastwood | Coen Brothers | 220 |
| 8 Phil Tisdale | Pen-Ups 7 | 220 |
| 9 David Young | In The City | 217 |
| 10 Robert Anderson | Robert's Rovers | 216 |
| 11 John Lofthouse | Dave 10 | 214 |
| 12 Terry Butler | Sold At The Bar | 212 |
| 13 Terry Butler | It's Revenge | 212 |
| 14 Robert Little | Dion Dion Dion | 212 |
| 15 Thomas Meakin | It's All Stars | 211 |
| 16 Stuart Butler | Spionthovilla | 210 |
| 17 John Hives | Boogaroo Dudes | 210 |
| 18 Michael Lynn | Sammiesunter | 210 |
| 19 Steve Onger | Porno Flick | 210 |
| 20 Richard Deane | On The Wagon | 210 |
| 21 James Walsh | Tigers Argle | 210 |
| 22 Steve Onger | Locomot No 66 | 210 |
| 23 John White | Fusegear | 210 |
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| 83 Ed Wickie | Team Two Bikes | 199 |
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| 97 Keith Hall | Ernie Ltd Mington | 197 |
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Plus nine others on 197 points

What do you mean your team is hopeless? You can win £500

Enter a new team now for ON-Target, where this week your team need not score any points at all in order to win the weekly prize

Congratulations to Martyn Robinson, the third winner of ON-Target, who finds himself £500 richer and possessor of an EA Sports Pack. Fourteen other managers have also won themselves New Year prizes.

Even if you do not have a Fantasy League team, you can enter this new game now — or enter a new one simply for ON-Target. All managers have the chance to win a share of £28,000 of new prizes. The Times has teamed up with EA Sports to offer you the chance to win the renowned FIFA 99 game. Every week you have the chance to win:

■ 1st Prize: £500 plus an EA Sports Pack
■ 4 runners up: EA Sports Packs
■ 10 additional runners up: FIFA 99 CD-Rom.
Each EA Sports Pack contains: FIFA 99 for the PlayStation; FIFA 99 for the PC; EA Sports T-Shirt, keyring and mini football plus a record bag.
F YOU already have a team in the main game, then you're ready to play ON-Target. Simply check our score each week and see if their total is the same as our ON-Target score. You have scored the exact target points, a quick call to our ON-Target winners' line (national rate call) will get you in the draw to win one of the 15 prizes.
If your ON-Target score may be high or low. There could be more than one score each week. So it's worth checking your performance every week.
To have your PIN number handy to call the winners line on:

THIS WEEK'S ON-TARGET SCORE

8

Call 0870 901 4270
or 01470 901 4270

If you don't have a team, or want to sign up another one, enter now by filling in the entry form. There are no limits to how many teams you enter. Not only could you win the ON-Target prize, but you could win the main game weekly (£500) or monthly (£1,000) prizes.



HOW TO ENTER: Look up your players' weekly point scores opposite and add them up, or call the checkline 0640 625 102. If your total score for this week matches the ON-Target number(s), then call our claim line on 0870 901 4270 (calls charged at national rate).

should last about a minute). Claims must be made before midnight on Sunday night. The lines then close until the next game starts on Tuesday morning.

If you have scored the correct number of points AND called the claim line, you go into the draw. Just look in the paper on the following Tuesday to see if you have won.

FANTASY LEAGUE QUIZ

Last week's teaser asked you to find the connection between the four players' pictures using your body of footballing knowledge. The players were Carlton Palmer, Robbie Mustoe, Marcus Hedman and Ian Harte. Spelling aside, the bodily parts become apparent.

This week try and find the connection between the quartet pictured. Answers on this page next week.

Two weeks ago our Christmas quiz asked you to discover the seasonal connection between four players. Answers and prize details are mentioned in the article above.

Are you carrying crocks in your team?

A WEEKEND off in the FA Carling Premiership because of the FA Cup third round gives managers in The Times Fantasy League time to reflect on what might have been, and indeed, what could still be.

In an ideal world, the arrival of the new year would give your side a new lease of life — your goal-starved striker hits the mark with regularity, and your crocked midfielder eventually comes off the treatment table and makes a dream comeback with a goal and an assist. Unfortunately we do not live in an ideal world, which is why we have to rely on Fantasy League's own Fairy Godmother, the transfer market, in order to grant your wishes for the rest of the season.

In the winter months, it is quite often difficult fielding a side of 11 fully-fit players every week. It is a time when injuries and suspensions take their toll and much angst is caused by hearing those dreaded words — "out for the season".

In the last month, the Leeds United defenders Martin Hiden and Robert Molenaar have been ruled out for the remainder of the season with

cruciate ligament injuries. In such circumstances, there is no point in feeling sorry for yourself for a couple of weeks. Now is the time for action and there's no reason to hang about — the sooner your transfer request is handed in, the sooner your side will be up and running again.

For instance, if you are amongst the unlucky managers who own Hiden or Molenaar, then by buying a direct replacement in the Leeds central defence such as Woodgate, not only have you increased the points scoring potential of your side, but you have also pocketed a handy £200,000 profit which could be used to strengthen another area of your side.

Many managers will be anxious to hear the result of

CHECK YOUR SCORES
TELEPHONE 0640 62 51 02

YOUTH LEAGUE TOP 10

| | | |
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| 1 Robert Anderson | Robert's Rovers | 216 |
| 2 Stuart Butler | Spionthovilla | 210 |
| 3 Graham Jones | Gags | 198 |
| 4 Richard Low | Geord United | 198 |
| 5 Matthew O'Neil | The M Team | 197 |
| 6 Richard Burton | No Fear | 196 |
| 7 Nicholas Fenney | Fillesneilurs | 196 |
| 8 Dominic McDonnell | Birchall Bullets | 196 |
| 9 Paul Williams | Where Was Gazza | 195 |
| 10 David Switbank | Titus All Stars | 194 |



Julian Joachim, who features in the Tom's Tiddlers team

TRANSFER LINE

Want to make one of your 12 transfers?
Call
0640 62 51 03
(ex-UK +44 870 901 4293)
0640 calls cost 60p per minute.
Ex-UK calls charged at national rates

NEWS

Labour feud claims third victim

Senior members of the Cabinet last night urged their colleagues "to draw a line" under the most damaging episode of Mr Blair's Government, as the home loan affair claimed its third important casualty.

Charlie Whelan, the Chancellor's trusted press secretary was forced to resign after continuing accusations that he was the culprit who leaked details of the £373,000 loan to Peter Mandelson from Geoffrey Robinson. Page 1

Euro enjoys smooth global launch

Europe's fledgling currency was given a royal baptism by the financial markets in a day's trading that saw it rise against the dollar. European Union leaders greeted the launch in the City, the Continent, Wall Street and Asia as a sign of confidence that the euro is set to establish itself alongside the dollar. Page 1

Flu calls jam 999

Panic-stricken patients are precipitating a crisis in the overstretched health service by making 999 calls to demand ambulances to take them to hospital. Pages 1, 8

Birds ruffle Dome

Work on the Millennium Dome could be halted by the arrival of three pairs of black redstarts, one of the country's rarest nesting birds, at the construction site in Greenwich. It is against the law to disturb the "bomb-site birds" once they start nesting. Pages 1, 7

Diana coin issued

Sixteen months after her death, Diana Princess of Wales takes her place on a coin of the realm. The new £5 commemorative coin, unveiled by the Royal Mint today, is the first of four official memorials to the Princess. Page 2

Yemeni bomb plot

The leader of the terrorist gang who kidnapped 16 Western tourists in Yemen had planned to bomb British targets in Aden five days earlier. Page 3

Storms lash Scotland

Gale force winds gusting at 83mph battered Scotland and Ireland yesterday leaving one man dead and thousands without electricity. A 74-year-old man drowned when he was blown into the River Almond at Crumond, outside Edinburgh. Page 5

Tourist marries her Aussie hero

A backpacker from Birmingham has married her own "Crocodile Dundee" after he rescued her from a crocodile-infested river in the Australian outback. Abigail Wilkinson's dramatic meeting with her husband-to-be, David Welders, happened while she was on a canoeing trip at Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia. Page 10

Cold war camp plan

A secret plan to send thousands of Americans to Putin's holiday camps before evacuating them from Europe in the event of war with the Soviet Union has been revealed in documents released under the 50-year rule. Page 9

US cautious on euro

The Clinton Administration has greeted the launch of the euro with a cautious enthusiasm that belies the problems the project may present. Page 10

Mosque massacre

Guns opened fire on Shia Muslims as they knelt in prayer at a mosque in eastern Punjab province yesterday, killing 16 people. Injured worshippers crawled to loudspeakers and pleaded for help. Page 11

Angola in turmoil

Tens of thousands of Angolan civilians face starvation and death after the United Nations suspended flights to war-torn parts of the country, sparking fears that the rebel Unita movement aimed to overrun government-held towns sheltering hundreds of thousands of refugees. Page 12

Washington wives

The clearest indications yet that Hillary Clinton is planning to launch her own political career electrified Washington as preparations continued for her husband's Senate trial. Page 13



British troops working with Nato in Macedonia yesterday held a remembrance service in Skopje for soldiers killed in World War One

Shares leap: European stock

markets celebrated the smooth introduction of the euro with a euphoric surge, as investors bought into Europe's biggest companies. Page 23

Merger expected: Bell Atlantic

and AirTouch Communications, the United States phone companies, have delayed an announcement of their \$45 billion merger, but are still expected to agree to a deal this week. Page 23

Markets: The FTSE 100 index

fell 3.20 points to 3879.4. The pound fell 0.41 cents to \$1.6999 and 0.56p against the euro to 71.09p. Page 26

Football: Keith Wiseman

resigned as chairman of the Football Association after admitting that he had made mistakes in his contacts with the FA of Wales. The vice-chairman, Geoff Thompson, takes over as acting chairman. Page 44

Cricket: Michael Slater

scored 123 out of Australia's total of 184 in the final Test in Sydney. Page 40

Sailing: Senior figures

within the Royal Yachting Association are exasperated by the failure of the Spirit of Britain syndicate to secure primary sponsors for their America's Cup challenge. Page 42

Racing: A new daily racing

card on the streets in time for the Cheltenham Festival after nine months of negotiations with potential backers. Page 39

Cast out: Two powerful new

London exhibitions devoted to the works of Rachel Whiteread and Kerry Stewart are haunted by sad shapes and glacial shadows of death. Page 31

Fancy footwork: A cast change

for the Royal Ballet's *La Fille mal gardée* at the Festival Hall puts Cuban recruit Carlos Acosta in the limelight. Page 32

Parent power: While the

Government ponders the state of arts education, artists from Lesley Garrett to Antony Gormley reveal how their own offspring fare. Page 33

Street people: How North

London reacted to the "forum theatre" of Brazilian guru Augusto Boal and the Carabobo Citizens company of homeless performers. Page 33

Forbidden desire: Genetic

sexual attraction is common between long-lost relatives. One woman's story. Page 14

Dr Thomas Stuttaford: How

a wonder drug of 1998 will be a boon for women. Page 14

Think small: "Lose weight

even while eating second and third helpings of traditional main courses." The second extract from Dr Robert C. Adkins's book. Page 15

New group: Yet another

rival to existing small business organisations, has been set up. Page 30

On the move: "We must

approach change with confidence." Frances Gibb, the new Chairman of the Bar Council. Page 35

Holiday worry: Planning

an excursion to somewhere exotic? How well-informed are you. Page 37

Whether the powerful bomb

that blew away a bridge on the road Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was to take was actually an assassination attempt or a warning to him, must remain a matter of conjecture. But given the history of violence in the subcontinent, it would not be surprising if this was an attempt on his life, botched by incompetence or poor technology. Hong Kong Standard

Preview: Rick Stein returns to travel the world in search of seafood recipes. *Seafood Odyssey* (BBC2, 8.30pm) Preview: Joe Joseph recalls the ups and downs in a new documentary. Pages 42, 43

Storms and teacups

The departure of Charlie Whelan, the Chancellor's colourful but destructive press secretary, is not likely to be in itself to prove of enormous consequence to the direction and fortunes of the Government. Page 17

Pity Pakistan

Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister, has promised to crack down on terrorism. But he shows neither the will nor capacity to do so. Page 17

Pre-millennium bug

For most people the cure for flu is simple: take a hot, sweet drink, find a good book or programme and go to bed. Page 17

LIBBY PURVES

The three Blairians will not be back from the Seychelles today to begin the arduously long state school Easter term. At this point the Prig Tendency starts competing for attention. Page 16

MICHAEL GOVE

The High Priest of the Third Way is himself at fault. For two things. His "project" is driven by calculation, not principle, and his Government in consequence operates as a court, not an enterprise. Page 16

IRWIN STELZER

Some of you worry about the long-term prospects for the world's only superpower. For those who like to think about that, I will share a recurrent nightmare. Page 16

Charles John Robert Manners, 10th Duke of Rutland; Sir William Stuttaford, CBE, former chairman of the Unit Trusts Association and president of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations; Sebastian Haffner, German author. Page 19

UK commissioners for Brussels: society's "moral wasteland"; Fifties public housing: birth of the euro; woodland burials: causes of gout; strain of the train: Balliol protest; Shakespeare tribute; Shakespeare honoured. Page 17



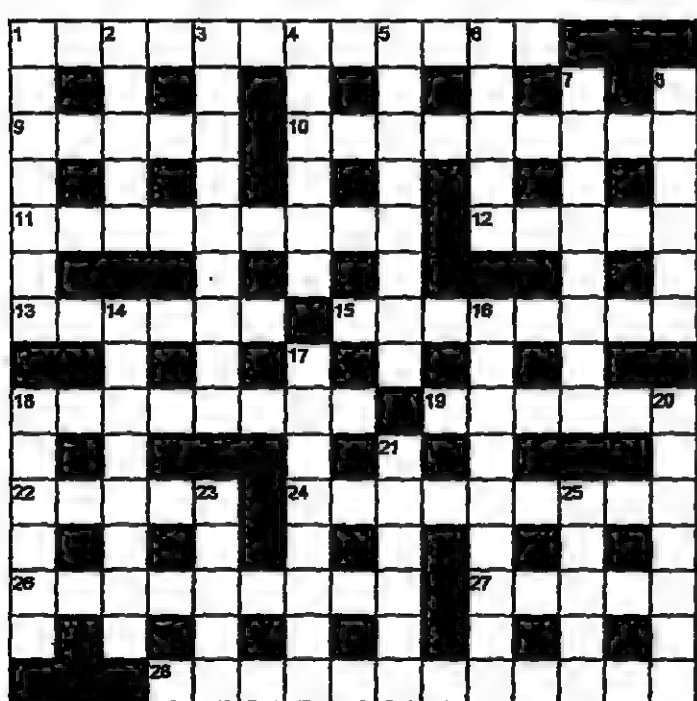
Millennium bug act now!

TOMORROW IN THE TIMES

■ INTERFACE You might think your business is safe, but the millennium bug could still ruin it

■ HOMES Should a buyer be able to find out what a seller originally paid for a house?

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,992



- ACROSS
- 1 Movement in simple dance with variation in time (12).
 - 9 Dog's makeshift monument (5).
 - 10 Handle action that establishes proof of ownership (5-4).
 - 11 Decline to put small pig with old sow (3,2,4).
 - 12 Duck or gull losing head (5).
 - 13 Contemplating return of stick to curb transgression (6).
 - 15 Uncultured fellow taking certain ballads to heart? Quite likely (8).
 - 16 Gain distinction from project (5,3).
 - 19 Muck, for example, found in middle of street (6).
 - 22 Warm and cosy place needed by King Lear (5).
 - 24 In confusion, tries fire alarms (9).

- DOWN
- 1 Propriety requiring no drink to be served after festive month (7).
 - 2 One coming down from noble family for shoot (5).
 - 3 Murderer's refuge in sleep (4,2,3).
 - 4 Vessel from Cape, say (6).
 - 5 Ring fighters getting to perform in a smart turnout (8).
 - 6 Family member announcing holiday destination on Med (5).
 - 7 A number becoming disorderly under pressure to find steady area (8).
 - 8 Forms an attachment nowadays with present (6).
 - 14 Collect for service in Chinese city (10).
 - 16 Sole punishment for a bandit so awful (9).
 - 17 Plant denied chlorophyll at the outset is flatter (6,2).
 - 18 Not much of a rebuttal (6).
 - 20 Earn a lot of leave on day of victory (7).
 - 21 Skill needed to get round cold here - freezing cold, mostly (6).
 - 23 Impish female diving into rising river (5).
 - 25 One's leaving an Eastern state for another (5).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,991



Times Two Crossword, page 44

Latest Road and Weather conditions

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General: England and Wales will

again be very mild, but it will be cloudy with outbreaks of rain and drizzle. The rain will be heaviest across Wales and northern England and brighter sides will push northwards across southern England later on. After a chilly start, cloud and rain will spread into Northern Ireland and will also edge into southern Scotland, turning wintry over the Highlands at first. Further north, it will stay cold with some of sunny spells and showers and only light breezes. Page 39

Tonight: cloudy and wet in northern

England, Scotland and Northern Ireland with snow over the Scottish mountains. Central England and Wales will be cloudy but dry, while southern England will have some clear spells. Page 39

London, SE England, Central S

England: mild and cloudy with patchy drizzle. Brighter later, cloud and rain clearing off to south to southwesterly wind. Max 14C (57F). Page 39

E Anglia, E Midlands, E England, W

Midlands, SW England, S Wales, N Wales: more cloud and rain clearing off to south to southwesterly wind. Max 13C (55F). Page 39

Channel Islands: cloudy, then sunny

spells. Wind fresh, southerly. Max 13C (55F). Page 39

NW England, Lake District, Isle

of Man, Central N England, NE England: outbreaks of rain, some heavy. One towards evening. Moderate southwesterly

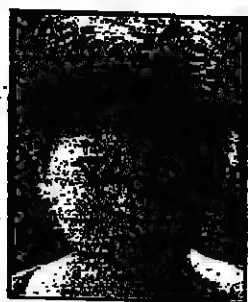
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Janet Bush says UK euro entry is not inevitable

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

TUESDAY JANUARY 5 1999

ICI falls 6% after US puts block on Tioxide disposal

By Carl Mortimer, International Business Editor

SHARES in Britain's largest quoted chemical company plunged yesterday after US regulators blocked the sale of ICI's Tioxide business to DuPont and NL Industries. Concern that the group's £5 billion disposal programme would be further delayed caused ICI shares to shed 6 per cent, reducing the chemical company's market value by £200 million. Standard & Poor's, the debasing agency, yesterday revised ICI's outlook from stable to negative, warning that the group's ability to divest itself of the Tioxide business was uncertain. ICI added to the sense of uncertainty by announcing a big restructuring of its paint, industrial specialties and halochemicals businesses, leading to the loss of 1,000 jobs.

The UK will suffer about 500 redundancies, of which between 300 and 400 will affect ICI's Runcom plant where the Halochemicals business is based. A further 120 jobs will be lost from industrial specialties in Warrington.

ICI has been forced to scrap a planned sale of Tioxide, a pigments business, because of concerns by Washington's Federal Trade Commission that the buyers would secure excessive market power. Tioxide makes titanium dioxide, a whitener used in paint. DuPont would have secured some 33 per cent of the world market and an important share in imports to the US.

Charles Miller Smith, ICI's chief executive, said that the company would look at all the options for Tioxide, including a trade sale and break-up of the company but he indicated that the latter was now a preferred option. He said: "An IPO is a good front-runner." He also indicated that financial buyers, such as leveraged buy-out funds, might be attracted by Tioxide's cashflow.

City analysts were less enthused by the flotation plans. Robyn Coombs, of Merrill Lynch, said that a public offer would be difficult as titanium dioxide had recently risen strongly in price, offering less recovery potential for investors.

The company insisted that the earnings impact of not achieving the planned sales would be neutral and predicted that pre-tax profits would exceed £345 million in 1998 and confirmed that it would pay an unchanged full-year dividend of 32p per share. The £120 million pre-tax restructuring charge will wipe out much of the £120 million post-tax gain from the sale of Teesside Utilities and Services but will pay back £70 million in a full year.

ICI is cutting 10 per cent of the workforce in its US paints business where margins have been damaged in a recent price war.

Continued, page 26

European shares surge as single currency gains value

By Saeed Shah, Paul Durman and Richard Miles

EUROPEAN stock markets celebrated the smooth introduction of the euro with a euphoric surge, as investors rushed to buy into Europe's biggest companies. London, however, was left out of the euro-land party.

The benchmark Dow Jones Euro-STOXX 50 index of 50 European blue chips jumped 6 per cent but, in contrast, London's FTSE 100 index of leading British shares closed 3.2 points lower at 5,879.4.

David Bowers, a European equity strategist at Merrill Lynch, said: "The ins have had a better day than the outs."

The euro appreciated modestly as many had expected, hitting early highs above \$1.19, compared with the \$1.1675 level at which its precursor, the European currency unit, ended life on Thursday. However, by afternoon trading, the euro had eased back to \$1.1790.

The pound ended a volatile day of trading at just above 71 pence to the euro. During the day, it moved in a wide range of more than 3 per cent against the single currency, hitting a high of 70 pence and a low of 72.45 pence to the euro. Its trade-weighted index fell to 99.0 from 99.7.

Nick Holtby, an equity trader at Warburg Dillon Read,

By Richard Miles, Banking Correspondent

NATWEST yesterday mounted a brave, but apparently doomed, defence of the pound by refusing to put the euro first when quoting conversion rates for the single currency in the wholesale markets.

While virtually every other big City institution accepted the euro as the fixed element in the conversion formula — no doubt reflecting its likely displacement of sterling as

one of the world's reserve currencies — NatWest clung determinedly to pounds and pence.

Alas, NatWest is having to rethink its patriotic stance in the light of the market practice of quoting 71p to the euro, rather than 1.4 euros to the pound. Anneke Van Woudenberg, who has led the conversion programme for NatWest's capital markets division, said the bank may change its policy of putting the pound first for the sake of clarity in the market. "You

have to remember this is a unique situation," she said.

"There is no one body which states how the conversion should be expressed. We have adopted a flexible approach."

Ms Van Woudenberg added that it would be determined during the course of the first trading day whether it was more appropriate to put the euro first in the wholesale markets.

Which currency should go first had been the subject of some heated debate in the industry during the run-up to

conversion. While it had proved impossible to come to a unanimous view, the consensus was for the euro first, according to Margaret Soden, senior manager of the EMU programme at HSBC.

One consequence of relegating sterling to second place is that the pound will disappear from City screens as conversion rates are expressed in pence. "Traders are already getting used to thinking of 70p or 71p to the euro," said Ms Soden.

Mr Bowers, of Merrill Lynch, expressed surprise at the magnitude of the rallies, saying that some European equities in the first half of this year was positive.

Some voices were more sceptical. George Magnus, chief economist at Warburg Dillon Read, said that the strength of the euro was not intrinsic but reflected the weakness of the dollar. Commenting on European stock markets, Richard Jeffrey, chief economist at the Charterhouse Group, said that the strength of the French and German markets did not look warranted by the economic background. "It's the mood of the day," he said.

"Only history will tell us whether the introduction of the euro deserves to be treated as it has been by the French and German markets. I'm deeply suspicious," he added.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones industrial average was quoted about 70 points higher at mid-session.

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surge of buying interest partly to pent-up demand. "A lot of people were told to refrain from dealing in the run-up to the conversion weekend. This was the first chance for the liquidity to get into the market," he said.

He added that the introduction of the euro highlighted the extent to which European assets were "under-owned" relative to the importance of European economies.

Eric Chaney, head of European economic research at Morgan Stanley, said that it was unusual for European equities, currencies and bonds to move up in tandem.

He said: "I would have thought today [that] Germans bought French equities, Italians bought French bonds, and so on. The euro makes cross-border investment easier and there is no currency risk."

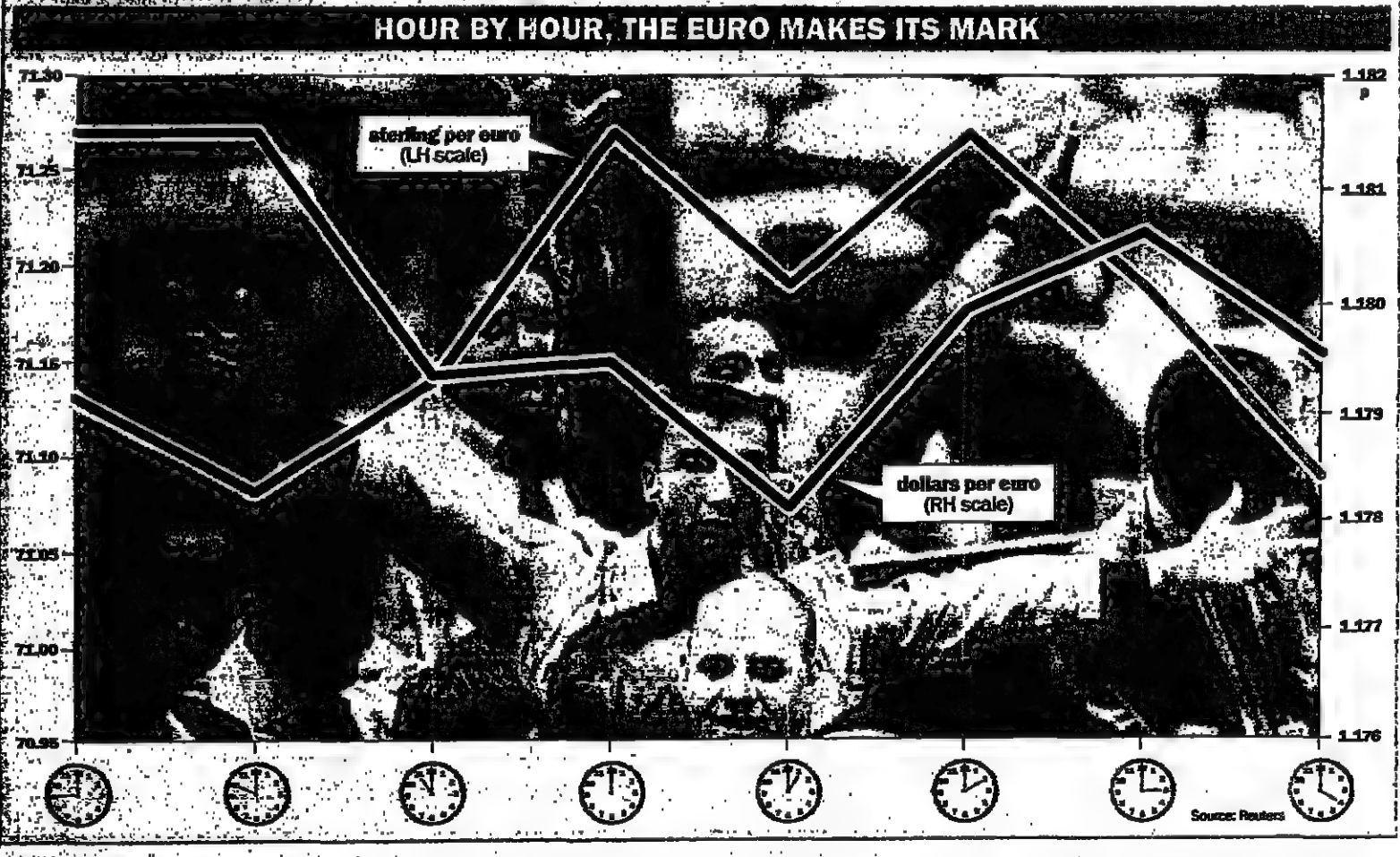
Mr Chaney said that, although the strength of yesterday's rally could not be sustained, the outlook for European equities in the first half of this year was positive.

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"Only history will tell us whether the introduction of the euro deserves to be treated as it has been by the French and German markets. I'm deeply suspicious," he added.

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MPC rate-setters get mixed picture

By Janet Bush, Economics Editor

MANUFACTURING activity fell sharply again in December, but evidence that the recent fall in exports has begun to ease provided an ambiguous backdrop to this week's meeting of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply said that total manufacturing fell for the ninth consecutive month and that the decline was the third-largest in a month since the survey was begun seven years ago. However, the institute's export or-

ders index improved from 38.9 in November to 42.2 in December, signalling a slowing in the pace of decline that purchasing managers attributed to the depreciation of sterling. The pace of redundancies in manufacturing also slowed last month.

The institute's prices index fell to a new low of 35.1, from 35.2 in November, underlining current disinflation at home and abroad.

The City is divided on whether the MPC will once again cut interest rates at its meeting, which starts tomorrow and

ends on Thursday. A poll of 19 economists by Reuters conducted after the last monetary policy meeting in December found that seven expected rates to be cut again, with 11 predicting that the next move would be in February or March and one "don't know".

Supporting the view that the MPC will stay its hand, on rates were figures yesterday showing that the consumer's appetite to borrow remains robust. Borrowing on credit cards rose by a record £589 million in November, the biggest monthly rise since the Bank of

England started publishing this series in 1993.

Overall consumer credit rose by £1.3 billion, just exceeding the £1.2 billion rise reported in October. The figures seemed to confirm data showing stronger than expected shop sales in the run-up to Christmas.

Consolidating with yesterday's British purchasing managers' survey were similar reports from America, Germany and Italy, which were uniformly weak in the face of fragile world demand. In America the National Association of Pur-

chasing Management said that manufacturing slowed in December for the seventh month in a row. The association's monthly index of business activity fell to its lowest level since May 1991, contrary to Wall Street forecasts of a small rise.

In Germany the Purchasing Managers' Index showed the largest drop in output and the lowest level of output since the survey began in April 1996. It was the third monthly decline in a row. In Italy purchasing managers reported a drop in export orders for the sixth consecutive month.

US phone company merger delayed

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

BELL ATLANTIC and AirTouch Communications, the US phone companies, yesterday delayed an announcement of their \$45 billion (£27 billion) merger, but are still expected to agree to a deal this week.

The two local service providers were forced to admit being in talks after their shares surged on speculation that the boards of both companies met on Sunday but failed to approve the merger documents. Accounting issues are said to have prevented a launch of

the merger before markets opened for the year's first week of trading. Executives of Bell Atlantic are worried about goodwill charges that they fear could hold back profits for years to come.

The prospect of starting 1999 with another mega-merger has prolonged new year celebrations on Wall Street. After last year's biggest mergers in the space of 12 months, analysts had predicted a calming of activity.

Bell Atlantic is no stranger to Wall Street's merger department. In one of the first telecoms mega-mergers, Bell Atlantic absorbed Nynex and last year agreed to take over GTE, another phone and Internet company. The GTE deal has yet to be completed, making the AirTouch deal all the more ambitious.

The driving force behind Bell Atlantic's buying spree is a move to offer integrated services to US customers, both geographically and across prod-

uct segments. One analyst said: "The highest margins are to be had when you carry traffic from beginning to end on your own network."

The main benefit to Bell Atlantic of the merger with AirTouch will be a combination of mobile phone services. Bell Atlantic is a dominant mobile phone operator on the East Coast while AirTouch is strongest on the West Coast. Both compete with AT&T, which recently acquired TCI, a cable company. Regulators

forced TCI to divest its mobile phone interests. Similar restrictions may be placed on Bell-AirTouch.

Analysts said Bell Atlantic and AirTouch were particularly well matched because they used the same mobile phone technology. The combination of their networks should be far easier than some of the other recent telecoms mergers. AT&T's \$32 billion acquisition of TCI, in particular, is said to have resulted in extra infrastructure

costs of up to \$5 billion. The accelerating wave of consolidation in the American telecoms sector stands in marked contrast to the European market, which has seen the creation of countless private operators competing with former state monopolists such as BT and Deutsche Telekom.

While Europe is increasing competition to bring down prices, the US is seeing a growing limitation of consumer choice in a bid to create economies of scale.

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(TTS/01/99)

PowerGen buys plants for £95m

PowerGen boosted its stocks of environmentally friendly generation yesterday with the £94.9 million purchase of Yorkshire Electricity's combined heat and power (CHP) plants.

The power plants, which supply large businesses and public buildings, produce more power for less fuel and operate on a smaller scale than other forms of electricity generation. They are the only type, so far, to escape the Government's moratorium on new gas-fired power stations.

The four CHP plants from Yorkshire will be added to PowerGen's existing stock of five such plants and will, the generator said, mark its commitment to expanding in environmentally friendly power.

GKN in US deal

GKN, the engineer, is following up last month's purchase of the Interlake Corporation with a further US deal that will see it take full control of one of Interlake's investments. It has negotiated the right to pay \$65 million (£39 million) for the 20 per cent of Hoegaans, a powdered metal supplier, that Interlake does not own. It will be able to take possession of the stake, currently owned by Hoegaans, a separate Swedish company, a year after the Interlake deal is completed.

C&W acquisition

Cable & Wireless, the telecoms company, has acquired ECRC Network Services, a German Internet service provider (ISP), from ICL for £27.5 million. The purchase is the first since the resignation of Dick Brown as chief executive of C&W. ECRC, which specialises in the German corporate market, is one of the country's top five ISPs.

House price fall

House prices in the UK fell by 0.1 per cent in December, according to the monthly Halifax house price index. This comes in contrast to a fall of 0.7 per cent in November. The average price paid for a house in the UK in December was £73,124. Halifax expects annual house price increases to slow to 4 per cent over 1999 from 6 per cent in 1998.

TOURIST RATES

| | Bank | Bank |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| | Buy | Sell |
| Australia | 2.13 | 2.13 |
| Austria | 20.37 | 18.71 |
| Belgium | 59.58 | 54.99 |
| Canada | 2.48 | 2.48 |
| Cyprus Cyp £ | 0.8513 | 0.7904 |
| Denmark | 11.07 | 10.38 |
| Egypt | 6.17 | 6.17 |
| Finland | 8.92 | 8.17 |
| France | 6.70 | 6.97 |
| Germany | 2.318 | 2.574 |
| Greece | 4.98 | 4.47 |
| Hong Kong | 13.63 | 12.48 |
| India | 127 | 107 |
| Indonesia | 17040 | 12040 |
| Iran | 1.104 | 1.073 |
| Israel | 1.20 | 1.54 |
| Italy | 2.999 | 2.999 |
| Japan Yen | 202.11 | 184.58 |
| Malta | 0.658 | 0.593 |
| Netherlands | 3.252 | 2.997 |
| New Zealand | 1.71 | 2.03 |
| Norway | 13.01 | 12.07 |
| Portugal | 234.64 | 272.61 |
| S. Africa | 10.40 | 9.45 |
| Spain | 245.60 | 226.81 |
| Sweden | 14.11 | 13.01 |
| Switzerland | 1.42 | 1.508 |
| Turkey | 541.961 | 509.938 |
| USA | 1.785 | 1.822 |

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Mobile phone shares lifted by leap in sales

By CHRIS AYRES

AN ESTIMATED 2.5 million mobile phones were sold in the run-up to Christmas, three and half times more than in the same period in 1997, figures out yesterday revealed.

The numbers amazed industry analysts and set off a share-buying spree that put billions of pounds on the value of the mobile phone companies.

Analysts are now predicting that a further five million consumers will buy mobile phones in 1999, and that 39 per cent of Britain's adult population will be connected by 2000. The vast majority of new connections in last quarter of 1998 were for pre-pay services, which let people buy mobile phone handsets for about £70, and pay for calls with vouchers instead of receiving bills.

The industry also benefited from pre-pay phones being sold by chains such as Tesco and Boots as well as by its usual retail outlets.

Vodafone, the industry leader, yesterday saw its market

value rise by £2.25 billion to £32 billion after reporting nearly a million connections in the fourth quarter. Orange saw its value rise by £1.1 billion to £9.5 billion. Shares in Cable & Wireless, part-owner of One2One, also rose, as did shares in British Telecom and Securicor, which jointly own Cellnet. Alan Lyons, an analyst with ABN Amro, said: "The growth is phenomenal. For the fourth quarter of 1998 Vodafone added more subscribers than the entire mobile phone industry added in the third quarter of the same year. The market is heading for saturation at a much faster rate than anyone thought possible. The only question mark is over the quality of growth being achieved."

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Market report, page 26

| NEW CUSTOMERS FOR THE MOBILE PHONE COMPANIES | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Net number (ie, taking into account customers leaving the network of British customers acquired by mobile phone companies) | | | | |
| | Quarter 4 1998 | Quarter 3 1998 | Quarter 4 1997 | Qtr 4 1997 |
| Vodafone | 933,000 | 243,000 | 257 | Circa 4.3m |
| Cellnet | 658,000 | 148,000 | 341 | Circa 4m |
| Orange | 512,000 | 130,000 | 294 | Circa 2.2m |
| One2One | 459,000 | 208,000 | 113 | Circa 1.9m |
| Total new UK mobile phone customers | 2.5 million | 726,000 | 244 | |



Chris Gent, head of Vodafone, whose shares leapt yesterday

Euro hurts Japan and Hong Kong

By SAIED SHAH

THE debut of the euro drove down Asia's two biggest stock markets yesterday, with shares dropping 3 per cent in Tokyo and more than 2 per cent in Hong Kong.

While the euro appreciated against the dollar on its first day of trading, the yen also

made ground against the greenback, which, according to brokers, hastened a slide in Tokyo stocks on fears that Japanese exports would become more expensive.

Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 average shed 426.28 points to close at 13,415.89, its lowest closing level since October 16.

Nick Parsons, chief current-

cy strategist at Paribas in London, said: "The yen was caught between euro strength and dollar weakness. Despite the new currency, it was a normal volatile day's trading for the yen."

The dollar dropped to near a three-month low in Asia at 112.79 yen, from 113.65 in New York last Thursday, be-

fore climbing back to around 113.60 by late afternoon.

Among leading stocks Sony lost ¥180 to close at ¥8050 (£44), Toyota fell ¥115 to ¥2955 and Honda retreated ¥130 to ¥3580.

The losses in Tokyo dragged Hong Kong down with it. The Hang Seng index fell 2.38 per cent to finish at 9,809.17.

More listed firms go private

By ROBERT LEA

THE NUMBER of stock market companies taken into private hands leapt last year, and many more public-to-private transactions are in prospect this year.

Institutional antipathy to small companies and a boom in venture capital funds are seen as reasons for the trend.

According to figures in a Close Brothers Corporate Finance report, 25 quoted companies, with a total value of £2.7 billion, were taken private in 1998 against only eight, together worth £550 million, in 1997. In 1996, only two listed companies went private.

Last year's boom in such transactions — including the £935 million acquisition of Thorn by Nomura and the £850 million acquisition of Willis Corroon by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts — is no flash in the pan, Close says. It believes that such transactions will at least double to 50 this year.

John Llewellyn Lloyd, chief executive of Close's corporate finance team, expects the trend to continue strongly, not least because of a growing bias in the City against small companies. Eighteen of last year's 25 deals were for less than £50 million.

"Smaller companies have unquestionably fallen victim to institutional 'sizeism', whereby, irrespective of their quality, their share ratings are being depressed by the mere fact that they are small," Mr Llewellyn Lloyd said. "We believe being taken private will prove increasingly popular to certain types of company as a buoyant private equity market is now providing smaller companies with the capital required to build their business far more readily and efficiently than the stock market is currently doing."

Close says: "Fund managers are increasingly eager to find exits from smaller company investments and in the future we are likely to see a more active role being played by fund managers in catalysing such exits."

B&B ready to counter conversion campaign

CHRISTOPHER RODRIGUES, chief executive of Bradford & Bingley, will today detail how he intends to combat the pro-conversion campaign of Stephen Major, one of its customers (see page 25).

It is possible that the building society, which wishes to retain its mutual status, may temporarily close its doors to new savers to thwart carpetbaggers hoping for a windfall. Mr Major, who describes himself as a "quantity surveyor or currently working as a plumber" is seeking election to the Bradford & Bingley board. He has put forward a resolution under which Bradford &

Bingley would become a bank, distributing payouts to its 2.5 million members. After checks to ensure the validity of the resolution, it seems likely to be put to the vote at the annual meeting in April. If the resolution is passed, then a formal conversion vote would follow. Observers say that Bradford & Bingley is sufficiently large to become a bank without first merging with another society. There has been an increase in account openings at the society, as the minimum necessary to qualify for any conversion payout is a relatively low £500.

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Standard Life to create 300 jobs

STANDARD LIFE BANK said yesterday that it is to create 300 jobs after its phone-line services were swamped by callers interested in its first mortgage offering (Richard Miles writes).

The banking arm of Europe's largest mutual life insurer said it had received more than 2,500 calls and £30 million worth of applications after opening for mortgage business at 8am.

The bank has attracted £2 billion in deposits from 170,000 savers since it was established 18 months ago.

Whistle-blowing on rogue directors rises

THE Department of Trade and Industry is getting a 100 calls a month from whistle-blowers informing on rogue directors and undischarged bankrupts who are continuing to illegally act as company executives.

The DTI's Insolvency Service said yesterday that the number of allegations concerning banned directors defying court orders had risen by 40 per cent to 1,200 last year. Complaints have led to more than 100 cases where Insolvency Service investigators are looking at having to reappoint miscreant directors. The news came as the

number of director disqualifications in the third quarter of 1998 rose by a third to 347. About 2,500 directors have been disqualified by the courts in the past two years.

Kim Howells, the Consumer Affairs Minister, said the number of calls to the Delinquent Directors Hotline showed that the Government's headline on "rogues and cheats" was supported not only by the public but also by the business community who wanted to see the privilege of limited liability removed from those who used company failure as a vehicle for personal gain.

Firms stay quiet on millennium bug

MANY companies are evading responsibility for any millennium bug disasters by keeping quiet about its potential effects on their business, claims a report by the Consumers' Association. A researcher wrote to 74 companies, posing as a worried customer wanting information about contingency plans and customers' legal rights should things go wrong. Only 52 responded, and not one gave information about consumers' rights in the event of a problem, or details on how to complain.

The report found that many companies used "jargon-bomb" such as "leveraged internal applications expertise" and concluded that much of the information in replies was "so vague as to be unusable". This may be the intention as companies hope to avoid creating a liability in law. Adam Taylor, a partner at Withers Solicitors, said: "A casual answer to a customer questionnaire could make an unwelcome reappearance in court resulting in legal liability where none existed before."

Finnish minister quits

FINLAND'S Communications Minister resigned yesterday over a scandal surrounding last year's £850 million flotation of a 20 per cent stake in Sonera, the country's flagship telecoms operator. Matti Aura stood down just one hour after the Sonera board dismissed Pekka Vennamo, the chief executive, for his dealings in Sonera shares. Mr Vennamo received more than 46,000 Sonera shares on flotation. By contrast, members of the public were allowed to buy just £20 shares each. The shares have nearly doubled in value.

PwC income up 20%

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS, the world's largest accounting and consulting group, reported a 20 per cent jump in fee income last year. Reporting consolidated figures out of last summer's merger of Coopers & Lybrand and Price Waterhouse, the firm said income in the year to June 30 came in at \$15.3 billion (£9.2 billion). The growth was fired by a 41 per cent increase in management consulting fees. This compared with an 18 per cent rise in tax income and 10 per cent growth in audit and business advisory services.

Polypipe expands

POLYPIPE, a plastic products maker, has bought Pagette Sanitar Produktions-Vertriebs, a maker of toilet seats and plastic chairs based in Bottrop, western Germany, for £9 million in cash. Polypipe will pay £6 million initially and a further £3 million dependent on the achievement of agreed operating profits for 1999 and 2000. For the year ending December 31, 1998, Pagette's operating profit was £50,000 on sales of £11.5 million. It has net assets of £300,000. Pagette will become part of Polypipe's bathroom and kitchen products division but will trade under the Pagette name.

Northern Rock disposal

NORTHERN ROCK, the bank, has sold its financial services business to the management for a nominal £1. The bank will continue to receive commission from the independent advisory firm, now called Versieck Lister & Co, for the next ten years in respect of previously written business. The disposal is in line with Northern Rock's strategy of concentrating on mortgages and savings and will have a minimal impact on income, the bank said yesterday. Northern Rock Financial Services is a three-man operation led by Roger Versieck.

Polish buy for Kalon

KALON GROUP, the paint and building materials company, is to acquire up to 60 per cent of Polifarb Cieszyn Wroclaw, the Polish paints company, for a maximum consideration of £49.2 million. Polifarb, which was created through the merger of two rival paint manufacturers two years ago, is listed on the Warsaw stock exchange and earned pre-tax profits of £10.6 million on turnover of £96.5 million in the year to December 31, 1997. Kalon shares were unchanged at 874p yesterday.

Berisford acquisition

BERISFORD, the manufacturer of commercial food service equipment and owner of Magnet kitchen stores, has acquired Convothorn Elektrogerate, a German ovenmaker, for up to £13 million. The price is dependent on the results of the company's results for 1998. Convothorn produces "comb-over" which combine convection and steam heating, and in 1997 reported an operating profit of DM3.6 million (£1.3 million) on a turnover of DM41 million. Berisford said that it expects the acquisition to be immediately earnings enhancing.

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bolton Liverpool Walsall Belfast Dover Grimsby Havant Leeds/Selby Peterborough Portsmouth Sheffield Stevenage York | Aberdeen Ashford Basingstoke Birmingham Birmingham Airport Birmingham City Brighouse Cardiff Cardiff City Carlisle Chester Colchester Coventry | Croydon Derby/Burton Edinburgh Epping Fareham Glasgow Erskine Gloucester Hull Ipswich Lancaster Leeds/Bradford Leicester | Lincoln Manchester Plymouth Rugby/Northampton Stoke on Trent Swansea Swindon Teesside Taunton Wakefield Warrington/Runcorn Washington |
| London - Heathrow London - Gatwick London - Bloomsbury London - Regent's Park London - Kensington London - Hampstead | Aylesbury Basildon Bexley Brentwood Bristol Cambridge Chester Dublin Farnborough Glasgow City | Glasgow Airport Guildford Haydock Hemel Hempstead High Wycombe Hull Marina Leeds Maidstone/Sevenoaks Manchester Airport Milton Keynes | Newcastle upon Tyne Norwich Nottingham City Nottingham/Derby Preston Reading Rochester South Mimms Southampton Southampton/Eastleigh |

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Lopsided birth of a notion



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

A Milan journalist, seeking views of typical Italians on the advent of the euro yesterday, seemed able to find only people who had been unemployed for decades. One Calabrian, who had officially been out of work for 18 years, realised what was expected. "For people like me with no money to start with," he said, "it makes no difference whether you are talking about lire or euros."

In one sense, he was right. Camparis and capuccinos still had to be paid for in lire. But prices of euro-denominated shares on the Milan exchange rose by 6.4 per cent in a day. Madrid was close behind, adjusting to a market in which a Portuguese or Finnish share is barely distinguishable from a French or German one, either for investors or for those from America.

The latter look responsible for a striking upsurge in telecom stocks all over the Continent. Shares in most national telecom companies jumped by at least 7 per cent and Deutsche Telekom by twice that as the euro underlined the scope for restructuring. In a second sense, however, the stage Calabrian could hardly have been more wrong. On opening day, the euro ended up roughly 0.5 per cent. If matters had been left to Far East traders, the welcome mark-up would have been at least double.

Italians and Spaniards, in particular, have paid a high price in jobs to qualify for the euro. Now they want their reward.

Lower interest rates will help euroland's Latin regions mightily, even if cheaper money is an embarrassment in booming Dublin. But a strong euro, if it is driven up largely by capital flows, would mean fewer jobs in the powerhouse of the Rhine Valley and therefore everywhere else in euroland too.

Only then should we see what the European Central Bank is made of. Will Wim Duisenberg and his band of brothers ignore the exchange rate if so, they will fall out. Or will they see it as a leading indicator to the virgin unexplored territory of a single euro-land economy?

The City will be sympathetic. Even in well-trodden economic territory, an *Inflation Report* written in November can look dated two months later.

Thus far, oddly enough, London has made a bigger contribution to creating the euro, as opposed to dreaming it up, than any other capital in Europe. If the transition in financial markets proves as smooth as it seemed on day one, it will be a triumph for the Bank of England,

for UK clearing and investment bankers, market administrators, clearing house officers, lawyers, traders and computer experts. That will not stop Frankfurt and others redoubling their efforts to piggyback on London's expertise and steal its business. British job-finders should be as grateful that sterling has shunned the euro as the City must and investors must be alarmed at being left out.

Checking out a change at B&B

Christopher Rodrigues has never come across as a convincing defender of mutuality. After all, the boss of Bradford & Bingley is hardly a life-long servant of the building society movement, having arrived at the B&B from Thos Cook a couple of years ago after the Germans sent him scuttling from the travel agency. However, once

he settled in to the cheerful life of being a borrower and lender in the land of friendly societies he decided this was rather nice. So every time someone goes "Shouldn't the B&B really be a bank?", Rodrigues comes out with the line that the society wants to remain mutual because that is the best way it can serve its members.

The trouble is that advocates of mutuality never put the issue to the test. The argument is that you do not need to verify the status quo so the only time that mutuals ever ask their members whether they want to convert to a plc is when someone starts a campaign to convert.

At Nationwide the conversion champion (or, if you prefer, the king of carpetbaggers) was free-lance brat Michael Hardern. At the B&B it's Stephen Major, a quantity surveyor-cum-plumber whose home at Lisburn in Northern Ireland is about as far from Bingley as one can imagine without leaving the UK.

At the moment Rodrigues is resisting Major but in the next few weeks he may have to face the reality of a members' vote on the issue. This will place him in a tricky situation. Should he gamble, like Brian Davis at Nationwide, that he can win a vote and remain mutual? After all, Davis succeeded only by a wafer-thin margin and his position would have been untenable had he lost.

Rodrigues is an ambitious man and realises that a demutualised B&B might be well placed to take advantage of the turmoil in the mortgage market. Unlike some of the other societies being targeted for conversion — such as the Portman or the Yorkshire — B&B is large enough to survive and thrive as a public company. It would also be a nice fit with, say, the Woolwich, and Rodrigues could easily end at the top of the merged business.

"win-win" situation. He can say he thinks B&B would better serve its customers as a mutual, but he is there to serve their will not impose his. So if they vote to pay off their credit card bills through a conversion windfall, then he will bow to their will, however ill thought out.

In debt, sterling can outlast the lot

Economists keep telling governments to balance their books. For insurance companies and pension funds needing to match future commitments, however, that would be a disaster. They need governments to raise money by issuing safe, "gilt-edged" bonds by virtue of which the insurers can themselves offer guarantees of future value to their policyholders.

Many companies offered guaranteed annuity rates in the 1980s, at rates much higher than those available today. What a pity that they could not or did not choose matching investments to ensure that they could deliver. Most of those who have bitten the bullet are now trying to quantify the loss and fund it. But they

have found that there is no outstanding government debt on any scale dated long enough in the future to cope with liabilities that may only become due 30 years or more ahead.

So the Treasury's Debt Management Office is being lobbied to issue 30-year stock, with warrants to renew the investment thereafter. Not unreasonably, the DMO is sceptical, reckoning that its job is to do the best for taxpayers, not insurers.

Thinking long might pay because the euro will provide such tough competition for investors' money. The UK could outflank its more short-termist euroland rivals and find new markets by issuing 30-bonds on the US model. The only sensible time to start is when long-term interest rates are historically low. Like now.

Mobile economy

FORGET the recession. The reason why retailers had such a bad Christmas is obvious when you walk down the street, take a train or drink in a pub. It assaults your ears with an incessant ring to the tune of *Ode To Joy* or *Whistling Dixie*. In the past three months, the mobile phone companies have signed up 2.5 million new subscribers. Most of these are on pre-paid deals and many were given phones as Christmas presents, so soaking up millions that might have been spent elsewhere on the high street.

Regal hotel talks may start consolidation

By DOMINIC WALSH

REGAL HOTEL GROUP is in talks to acquire County Hotels, a privately owned rival, in a joint venture deal that could kickstart the long-expected consolidation of the three-star hotel market.

The proposed deal, which is believed to value the 25-strong County chain at about £10 million, comes after the collapse in October of a move by Regal to take itself private with backing from Alchemy, the venture capitalist.

Regal, in common with joint competitors such as Jarvis, Macdonald and Friendly, has been mooted as a candidate for consolidation after the collapse of share prices in the sector amid fears of a recession. The sector has also seen private groups such as County, Principal Hotels and Menzies

Hotels failing to win support for stock market flotations. The idea of consolidating the three-star market is one that corporate financiers have been investigating for several months, Paul Dukes, a director of Closs Brothers Corporate Finance, said. "These groups have got nowhere to go individually. They haven't got critical mass, or well-known brands, and many don't have a London presence. We think the way forward is to consolidate, weed out the non-core stuff and you've got a decent provincial hotel group."

Regal yesterday said that the proposed acquisition of County would be "through a joint venture company in which Regal and a private equity firm would be shareholders." Any deal would be

made "without recourse to any equity fundraising."

The private equity firm in question is Duke Street Capital, which led County's £91 million buyout from Queens Moat Houses in March 1997. Duke Street speaks for about 90 per cent of County's equity.

Regal is expected to put some cash in the joint venture vehicle, but a source close to the company emphasised that there would be no effect on gearing. Regal is no stranger to joint ventures, its latest being with Holmes Place, the fitness club operator.

Insiders say that a deal with County could be tied up by the end of the month. Negotiations are likely to be made easier by the fact that Charles Holmes, County's chief executive, is a former Regal executive.

County, in which £12 million was invested last year, would eventually be absorbed into Regal's new County brand.

News of the talks comes after the takeover last month of Lyric Hotels — another former flotation candidate — by Friendly. Both Friendly and Principal are also believed to have looked at County.

Edmund Truell, chief executive of Duke Street, admitted that Regal was not the only operator he had spoken to. "We believe that County has got to grow to prosper," he said. "Equally, we do think that some of the mid-sized hotel groups should get together to leverage economies of scale. It wouldn't be surprising if, by the end of the year, you see a completely reshaped mid-market hotel sector."

BP Amoco soars on first day

BP AMOCO shares soared on their first day of trading, increasing the value of the merged oil company to £90 billion (Carl Mortished writes). The 21½p gain in the shares to 924½p quickly confirmed the benefits of being the top stock in the FTSE 100 index.

The rush to buy BP Amoco was seen as testimony to investor confidence in the cost-cutting strategy of Sir John Browne, chief executive, and has allowed the oil company to beat Glaxo Wellcome and BT to the top slot.

BP Amoco's gargantuan presence is curious, given the weakness of the oil price and the market's fascination with telecoms and drug companies. With BP Amoco and Shell accounting for almost a tenth of the index, the oil sector could end up driving the market.

Delancey builds 8% interest in Greycoat

By CARL MORTISHED

GREYCOAT was besieged by takeover speculation yesterday after a group linked to George Soros and British Land revealed that it had acquired almost 8 per cent of the Central London property developer.

Delancey Estates said that it had bought more than 7 million shares in Greycoat while Delancey's parent, the Soros-backed fund Quantum Realty, had picked up 660,000 in Greycoat stock. Strand Associates, another concert party, owns 150,000 shares in the property company. The total holding amounts to 8.45 million shares or 7.79 per cent of Greycoat.

The stake-building follows news that Wates City of London Properties had acquired 2 per cent of Greycoat and will again raise questions over the company's future.

Delancey, which is run by James Ritblat, son of John Ritblat, chairman of British Land, is believed to have bought the £11.8 million Greycoat stake from UK Active Value, a fund that two years ago attempted to unseat Greycoat's management by supporting a hostile bid approach from Moorfields, another property group.

Quantum Realty recently acquired 66 per cent of Delancey, paying more than £100 million for the interest.

It is Soros's second venture into UK property with the Ritblat family. Five years ago, Quantum invested in a £1 billion joint venture with British Land, only to pull out quickly in 1994.

Tempus, page 26

Tay hits back at investor

THE shareholder trying to effect a boardroom coup at Tay Homes, the northern housebuilder, was yesterday accused of trying to take over the company on the cheap (Robert Lea writes).

Richard Tice, joint chief executive of Sunley Group, the private housebuilder, and a 10 per cent shareholder in Tay, has requisitioned an extraordinary meeting of the company at which he and his own management team would replace the current board.

Norman Stubbs, Tay's chairman, ruled out giving in to Tice. In a statement to shareholders, he said: "The board is concerned that Mr Tice and Sunley are attempting to gain control of the company without paying any premium or indeed making any formal offer for the company." Tempus, page 26

Harris's son quits job at Carpetright

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

THE son of Lord Harris of Peckham has quit as an executive of Carpetright, the company chaired by his father.

Martin Harris, 29, who joined the company in 1991 and was promoted to the board as marketing director in 1996, was viewed as Lord Harris's heir apparent at Carpetright.

John Kitching, managing director, who will take on Mr Harris's board duties said he had left for personal reasons. "It is difficult working under your father, particularly a very strong personality like Phil [Lord Harris]," Mr Kitching said. He emphasised that there had not been any arguments, adding: "They are very, very close."

Mr Harris who owns less than 1 per cent of the company's shares is to stay on the Carpetright board as a non-executive, though he is planning to find work elsewhere. "He wants to go off and do his own thing," a spokesman said.

Carpetright shares closed up 2½p at 226½p.



Father and son: Lord Harris of Peckham, left, and Martin Harris

Goldsmiths' sales lack festive cheer

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

CHRISTMAS proved to be less than glittering for Goldsmiths, the jewellery retailer, which yesterday reported disappointing trade.

The company, which said before Christmas that it had received a preliminary takeover approach, made no comment on weekend reports that Junk Plascetti, its chairman and chief executive, had teamed up with Alchemy Partners, the venture capitalists, to offer 18½p a share for the group.

Analysts said they still expected Mr Plascetti to emerge as the bidder, but said a fair offer would have to be pitched at between 22½p and 250p. The shares fell from 169p to 154p.

Mr Plascetti said that the only strong period of trading was the actual week of Christmas. The four weeks to January 2 saw like-for-like sales down 2.6 per cent on last year. Goldsmiths, which has 154 branches, said sales for the four weeks, including new branches, were up 9.8 per cent. Sales for the 48 weeks to January 2 were 3.3 per cent up, like-for-like, and up 13.7 per cent in total.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Investors connect with surging telecoms sector

THE telecoms sector has rung in the new year just as it ended 1998 on a high note.

Yesterday it was again connecting perfectly with City investors to produce six of the top ten best performing shares among blue chips.

Leading the way higher was Orange, up 96p, or almost 14 per cent, to 794.5p, after adding 512,000 new customers during the final quarter of last year, and taking its total customer base to 2.16 million.

Vodafone had similar good news for shareholders with the price soaring 73p to £10.44 on turnover of £1.72 million shares. It attracted 933,000 new customers during the past quarter — way above even the most optimistic forecast.

Also showing less signs of running out of steam was Colt Telecom, up 56p to 953p. Telcel added 12p to 185p, and Securicor also put on 34p to 538p. It continues to own 40 per cent of Cellnet, which has added an extra 658,000 to its customer base in the past three months. British Telecom, owns the other 60 per cent of Cellnet, and sported a rise of 33p to 939p.

The dilemma facing brokers is whether to recommend the sector. The gains seen, so far, have been so spectacular, that there is an argument that the sector is now fully valued.

The rest of the equity market endured a rollercoaster ride before ending with modest falls. An early mark-up was frittered away as investors became concerned that a strong euro might weaken the pound and prevent a cut in interest rates later this week.

At one stage, the FTSE 100 index fell more than 70 points with not even an opening rise of almost 170 points in the Dow Jones industrial average able to offer comfort. The index eventually closed just 3.2 down at 5,879.4, while the FTSE 250 index also slipped 3.7 to 4,851.0.

Turnover of £839 million was bolstered by heavy trading in the enlarged British Petroleum after its agreed merger with Amoco. Dealers reported heavy demand with 187 million shares changing hands as the price advanced 214p to 924p. Brokers such as Merrill Lynch and Salomon Smith Barney have been waxing lyrical about the deal, while Goldman Sachs has been moved to raise its earnings forecast. Lehman



Victor Rice, chief executive of LucasVarity, who saw shares lifted 7p to 207p on the back of speculative buying

Brothers also rates the shares as its "top pick" in the oil sector.

There were plenty of new year share tips doing the rounds including Glaxo Wellcome, up 61p to £21.29, Allied Zurich, 47p dearer at 943p, and Rascal Electronics, 11p firmer at 348p.

Speculative buying lifted LucasVarity 7p higher to 207p on turnover of almost 5 mil-

lion shares. Weekend reports claimed the automotive parts and aerospace group may soon find itself on the receiving end of a bid from US rival TRW Incorporated. In November, LucasVarity failed to transfer the company's domicile to the US after proposals were rejected by shareholders. Fresh selling left Rank Group nursing a fall of 17p

to 214p in a thin market that saw less than 557,163 shares changing hands. Brokers said the fall may have been caused by suggestions that an unwanted parcel of shares may be doing the rounds.

Shares of Arcadia, the Top Shop and Burton retailer, slumped to a new low with a fall of 8p to 169p. Credit Suisse First Boston, the broker, is reported to have cut its profit forecast for the year by 17 per cent to £50 million. The group lost face after a shock profit warning towards the end of last year after previously indicating it would hit its target.

Goldsmiths fell 15p to 154p after reporting that business in its jewellery stores during the four weeks to January 2, had failed to live up to expectations.

Fresh demand for Pilkington, up 34p to 62p, enabled traders to release some spare stock back into the market.

Staffware managed to kill off some of the recent speculation in its share price by saying it knew of no reason for the recent rise. The software specialist will be issuing a trading statement before the end of the month. The price retreated 40p to 227p.

Two separate sellers totalling 16,140 shares at 17p left Sheffield United nursing a loss of 4p at 19p, making it one of the biggest fallers on the day.

Keep an eye on Syner Group, up another 9p to 182p. Talk of a bid has enabled the motor distributor to climb from a low of 123p since the middle of last year as investors expressed doubts about the willingness of the MPC to cut rates again when it meets on Thursday.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt put on 5p at £119.64 as a total of 18,000 contracts were completed. Among the conventional futures, Treasury 6 per cent 2021 rose 30p to £154.48, while by contrast, Treasury 7 per cent 2002 retreated 5p to £107.58.

NEW YORK: US shares were sharply higher as merger activity and the launch of the euro encouraged investors. At midday the Dow Jones industrial average was up 145.21 points to 9,326.64.

New York (midday):

Dow Jones 9326.64 (+145.21)
S&P Composite 1245.88 (+18.85)

Tokyo:

Nikkei Average 13415.88 (+425.28)

Hong Kong:

Hong Kong 9808.17 (+204.41)

Amsterdam:

AEX Index 2832.6 (+19.2)

Sydney:

All Ordinaries 2832.6 (+19.2)

Frankfurt:

DAX 5232.26 (+249.57)

Singapore:

Straits Times 1400.11 (+7.28)

Buenos Aires:

BVL 3645.94 (+131.43)

Paris:

CAC-40 1147.50 (+204.94)

Zurich:

SIX 2000.00 (+20.00)

London:

FTSE 100 4851.00 (-3.7)

FTSE 250 2770.8 (-1.6)

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Caution still needed

TRADING in the euro is only one day old and already analysts are saying the new currency could displace the US dollar as the world's preferred reserve currency. But while predictions in that direction sound premature, it is fair to assume that the euro will continue to strengthen against the dollar in the short term. It also looks likely to strengthen further against sterling, particularly as the eurozone is stouter than Britain economically and because interest rates in this country are on the downward path. In addition, like the new toy at Christmas, the euro is bound to attract attention as the children learn how to play with it.

Assuming the project continues viably and the currency continues to strengthen against the pound, British companies that export to euroland will benefit. It will give an earnings fillip to the likes of Alliance Unicom, Allied

Domeq, British Steel, BBA, BOC, BPF, Compass, GKN, Kingfisher, RMC, and TI Group. A strong euro will act less benignly on euro-land exporters such as LVMH, Unilever NV, Royal Dutch Petroleum and Bayer.

If a strong euro accurately reflects an economically strong eurozone, however, those British companies that stand to benefit from currency advantages may find it harder to compete with European rivals. The extent of the currency risk in sterling-denominated UK shares also means that shareholders in companies based here could miss out, at least partly, on any merger and acquisition activity.

But the threats posed by failure, as well as unexpected currency movements, mean that investors should not get too carried away with playing euro-forex. Good companies, after all, perform well in almost any environment.

ICI

BURYING ICI's industrial chemical history is proving to be a wearisome task. Just when the company appears to have left one big business behind, it grabs back at the ankle like some ghoul reaching out from the grave.

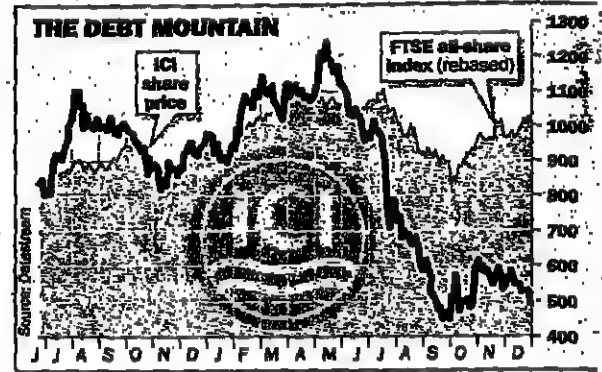
In fairness, ICI is not a bad business, having recently enjoyed buoyant prices and good margins. The irritation is that the ICI's ruling will make it more difficult to sell. With obvious buyers now out of the running, interested parties can also play harder to get and that means less money for ICI to spread reducing its debts. In the circumstances, ICI's attempt yesterday to push the flotation and looked more like tactics than a realistic plan. Titanium dioxide is moving later into the cycle and ICI needs to demonstrate it has more than one op-

tion, if it is to secure a good price from a potential buyer. Elsewhere, no news is bad news for disposals. In Halochemicals, ICI is being forced to underwrite a future disposal by paying for redundancies today. Buyers for the Wilton ethylene cracker are still sitting on their hands.

After yesterday's drubbing, ICI shares now yield more

than 6 per cent on the promised maintained dividend. However, interest cover is below acceptable levels and the payout is certain to be cut when ICI has completed its reconstruction.

The past should, in due course, be buried, but ICI has an awful lot of digging to do. In the meantime, the shares have few attractions.



Greycoat

THE very mention of the name George Soros used to be enough to invigorate enthusiasm for the most bombed out industry or asset class to hysterical levels.

But his touch, observed and admitted by the world's most famous Hungarian, is not as golden as it once was. This return to earth may account for the less than enthusiastic market reaction to news that Mr Soros is seriously interested in Greycoat, the property company operating mostly in Central London.

Mr Soros' interest is channelled through Delancey Estates, John Riblat of British Land, and his son James, also involved, extending a relatively long-term relationship with Mr Soros.

Shares in Greycoat rose 5p to 177p yesterday. The stock has risen gently since bottoming at 126p in October as speculation about Greycoat's acquisition credentials grew.

But the shares still languish 20 per cent beneath stated net asset value.

There should be more to come from Greycoat so buy. The corporate activity enhances the already decent case suggesting that property is an undervalued asset class. However, investors should be careful not to get left holding overpriced babies if Messrs Soros and Riblat decide to turn their attentions elsewhere.

Tay Homes

OVER the past five years the shares in Tay Homes, the northern housebuilder, have fallen from a high of 257p to 107p. In that time it has underperformed the building sector by about 40 per cent and the all-share index by 60 per cent. Its operating profit margins have similarly underperformed the industry norm.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that an outside management team with the backing of 27 per cent of the

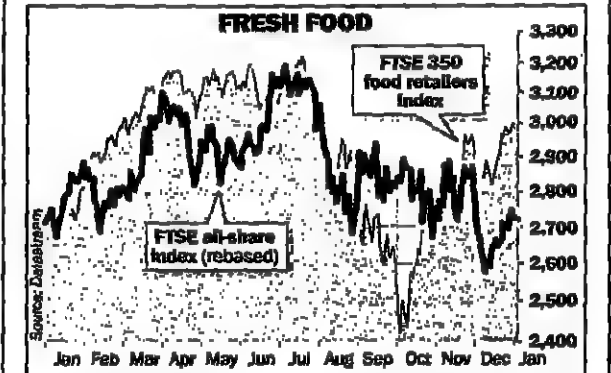
shares is trying to oust the serving board.

The boardroom struggle is a harmful distraction because it means both the incumbents and the pretenders will be occupied battling for control of the company rather than fighting for new business. However, shareholders should be encouraged that two management teams see something worth fighting over.

Both teams talk of seeking mergers with similar-sized companies, which appears to rule out a bid premium benefit from holding the shares. Independent shareholders should demand a premium for change of control, however. There are plenty of other bid candidates among housebuilders and accepting nothing for a change of control would set a dangerous precedent.

The market has not been excited by the corporate action by Tay. But it is action worth getting involved with. Buy.

EDITED BY ROBERT COLE



AT FIRST appearance it seemed as if fall-out war had broken out among the big food retailers groups after Asda halved the price of some of its leading grocery lines for a limited period.

Safeway finished the session 224p lower at 2794p. J Sainsbury was off 31p at 4504p, Tesco 94p at 162p and Morrison Supermarkets 4p at 275p. Asda, which had initiated the action, managed to consolidate an early 2p rise to finish at 1634p.

The consumer lobby

would like to see prices come down, while brokers are taking a more practical view.

Paul Smiddy, at Credit Lyonnais, the broker, says that this is one price war that owes more to media hype than hard facts. "There is not a lot around at the moment. This is the right time of the year for creating a good story," he says. He remains upbeat about the sector. "This is not the death of the sector as we know it. Valuations are not demanding," he added.

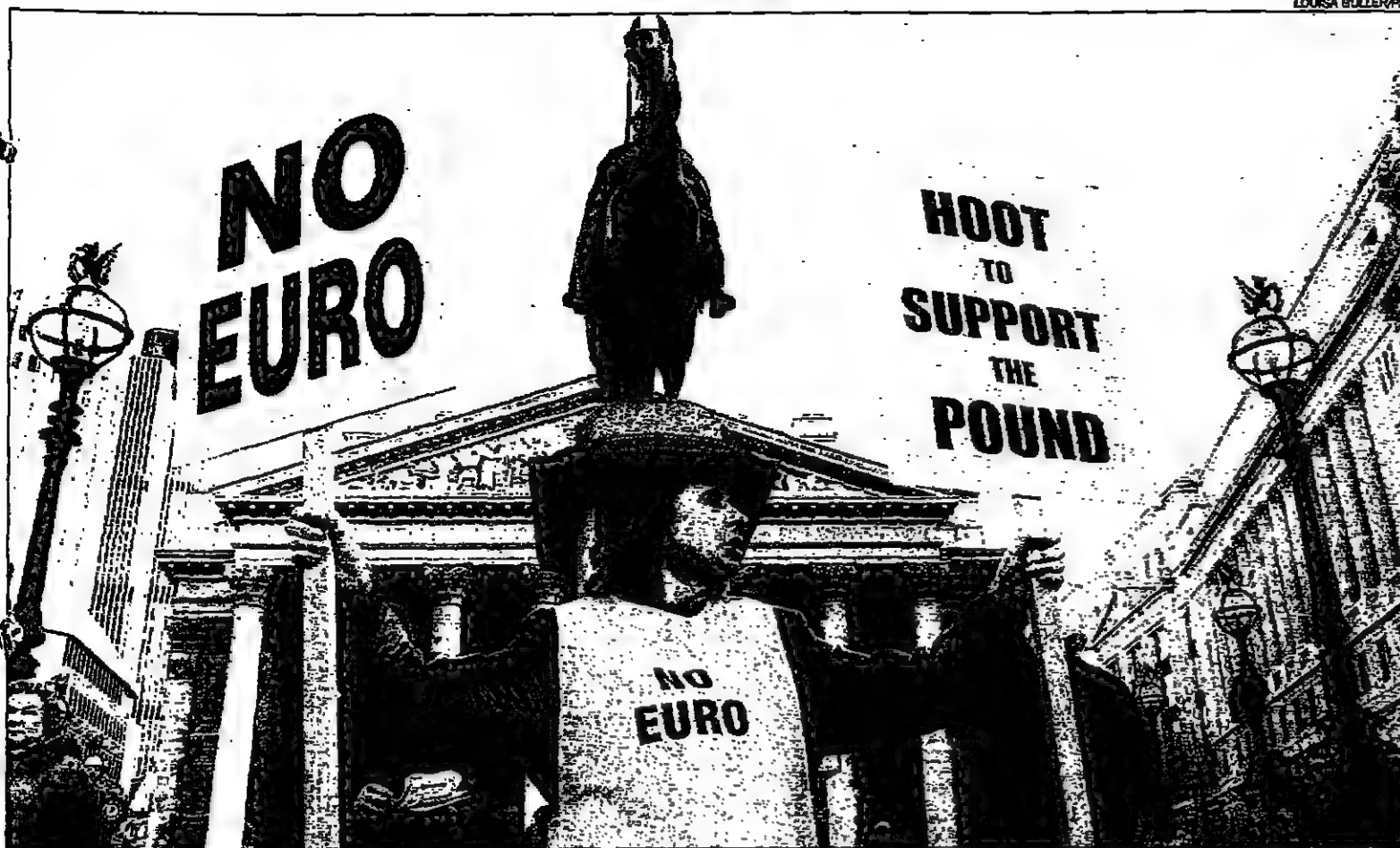
COMMODITIES

LIFFE

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Jul 99 300.00
Dec 99 300.00
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ECONOMIC VIEW

JANET BUSH



Protests against the single currency suggest a Little Englander mentality to some and to others serve as a check against a growing air of inevitability

The euro school of thought that is inevitably wrong

Driving through a windswept south Devon just after Christmas, a jolly sight lightened the gloom for a moment. A small country hotel boasted a welcome for an exhaustive list of credit cards and currencies but proclaimed itself a euro-free zone on defiant little placards along the length of its garden wall.

To some, no doubt, this would be seen as an anachronistic display of Little Englandism, rendered ridiculous by the epochal happenings on New Year's Day in Frankfurt and even in the City of London. To others — notably the 94 per cent of *Sun* readers in a poll published yesterday who said that they would vote "no" in a referendum on joining the single currency — this piece of insubordination served as a useful mental check against a developing air of inevitability that Britain will, begrudgingly but eventually, join.

At the weekend, the press was full of such stuff. One recurring theme was that British business wants to join the euro and will covertly take Britain's making a referendum of the people a sideshow. The *Sunday Times* reported that "Britain is entering Europe's single currency 'by stealth', as firms prepare to give workers all or part of their salaries in euros." This, the story related, was designed as a perk for employees who could enjoy European interest rates which are currently half those in Britain.

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The other tenet of the inevitability school is the simple observation that Britain cannot, must not, be left out. The leader in *The Independent on Sunday* told us that Britain's choice was between the euro and the pound, a "choice between realism and threadbare romanticism". It proclaimed its belief that Britain should join because the euro would work, financially and politically (without saying why). It said — breath-takingly — that joining would involve a "fractional loss of sovereignty".

Do any of these "inevitability" themes stack up as serious arguments that may, in time, effect a seismic shift of British opinion in favour of the euro? Let us take first the idea that British business is already effectively taking Britain into the euro by stealth. One important point is that business (however many leading chief executives are now, in one way or the other, on new Labour's payroll) is still not the Government. Companies are perfectly within their rights to pay their staff in euros if they want (bearing any exchange-rate risk that this may or may not entail). They are entitled, nay sensible, to be prepared to invoice and price in euros if they have considerable business in the single market. Multi-

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HSBC 
Midland Bank

Notice to customers

New interest rates for mortgage customers.

With effect from 4 January 1999 the interest rates for existing mortgage customers are decreased by 0.5% to:

| | Old rate % p.a. | New rate % p.a. | APR % |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Home Loan Rate | 8.20 | 7.70 | 7.9 |
| Home Improvement Loan Rate <small>(Loans sanctioned before 26.4.99)</small> | 10.20 | 9.70 | 10.0 |
| House Mortgage Rate | 8.20 | 7.70 | 7.9 |

Mortgage rates for new borrowers were effective from 22 December 1998

Midland Bank plc, 27-32 Poultry, London EC2P 2BX

HSBC is the brand of Midland Bank plc

Job comfort

NOW Charlie Whelan has done the decent thing in the study with his revolver, expect the inevitable backlash and lots about how they shouldn't have sacked the messenger only doing his job, quite a decent sort of chap and so on. In furtherance of this, I offer a bit of career guidance.

They are advertising a post at Whitehall. The salary, up to £63,490, would be an advance on what you were earning as Gordon's apparition. Charlie, plus "you will play a key

role in the communication of government policy to the media," so no change there.

You will "liaise with No 10 and other Government departments on cross-government presentation of policy", so less in-fighting this time, I'm afraid.

For Mike Ricketts, head of news at the Department of Trade and Industry, is off to look after the millennium bug, poor soul. Go for it, Charlie. It's right up your street. Let bygones be bygones.

MY THANKS to Cisco, which campaigns tirelessly for the smaller quoted company or SQC and has written to tell me that the long-awaited government report is ready. Better still, the Treasury's Working Group on SQCs has now delivered its report to the Paymaster-General, Geoffrey Robinson. Somehow I feel he may no longer be that bothered.

Prophetic

CONFIRMATION, if ever we needed it, of the stage managing behind the euro-launch. Jacques Santer, President of



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Virgin fare

ON THE day that we hear of the Newcastle-to-Bristol Virgin train that ran out of fuel at

Birmingham, I learn of another example of Richard Branson's cautious approach to stock control. The Birmingham-Euston service has just jacked up fares by some 20 per cent but is offering free breakfast as a consolation.

This arrived for one business traveller yesterday — a cold piece of bacon, a cold tomato and a cup of instant coffee. He complained, to be told they were out of eggs, orange juice and bread.

Oh, and coffee, said the attendant, when he asked for another cup. "You can have cake, if you like. Qu'ils mangent de brioche..."

A COLLEAGUE called Guardian Direct's insurance helpline over the holiday and was put on hold. The accompanying music was Let It Snow, sung by Bing Crosby.

Very droll. I am sure, if you are calling from the Highlands with the power out for the third day running and a large fir tree through the car windscreen.

Holy roller

AFTER Atila the Hun, Moses is the latest quasi-historical figure to be anointed as management guru. Moses on Leadership, subtitled with breathtaking idiosyncrasy *Why Everyone is a*

Leader, is by Richard Koch, who claims to have invented something called the 80/20 Principle and "taken on" Tony Blair's Third Way.

Like one of those wincingly modern sermons that "relates" the Bible to the modern world — "In those days they didn't have aeroplanes or buses, so they had to ride on a donkey" — Koch links the journey to the Promised Land to the formation of a new company and a corporate culture.

As ever, there is the odd nugget of unintentional humour. "Moses never read *The One Minute Manager*. In a way this was a serious handicap."

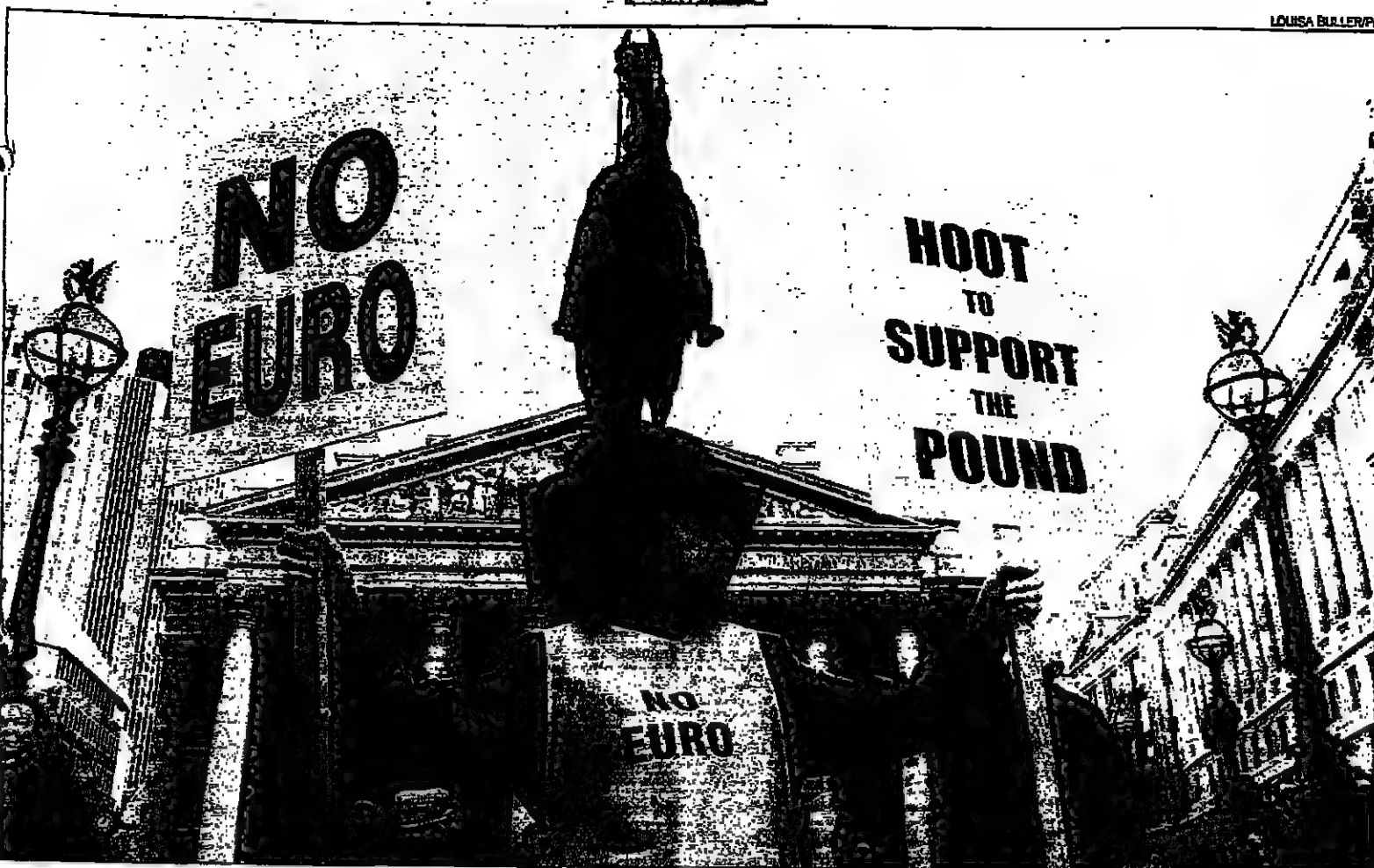
MARTIN WALLER



Profit without honour — Moses, by Michelangelo, an unlikely management guru



"Would our profits sound better if we convert them to euros?"



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Santer's office also put out another release about how the success of the euro would lead to a single stock market, a single market in banking, etc. etc. The speech, however, was earmarked for delivery later in the day. Whatever had actually happened on the foreign exchanges in the meantime.

Virgin fare ON THE day that we hear of the Newcastle-to-Bristol Virgin train that ran out of fuel at

Birmingham. I learn of another example of Richard Branson's cautious approach to stock control. The Birmingham-Euston service has just jacked up fares by some 20 per cent but is offering free breakfast as a consolation.

This arrived for one business traveller yesterday — a cold piece of bacon, a cold tomato and a cup of instant coffee. He complained, to be told they were out of eggs, orange juice and bread.

Oh, and coffee, said the attendant, when he asked for another cup. "You can have cake, if you like." Qu'il mangent de broche...

A COLLEAGUE called *Guardian Direct's* insurance helpline over the holiday and was put on hold. The accompanying music was Let It Snow, sung by Bing Crosby.

Very droll, I am sure, if you are calling from the Highlands with the power out for the third day running and a large fir tree through the car windshield.

Holy roller AFTER Atilla the Hun, Moses is the latest quasi-historical figure to be anointed as management guru. Moses on *Leadership*, subtitled with breathtaking idiosyncrasy *Why Everyone is a*

Leader, is by Richard Koch, who claims to have invented something called the 80/20 Principle and "taken on" Tony Blair's Third Way.

Like one of those wincingly modern sermons that "relates" the Bible to the modern world — "In those days they didn't have aeroplanes or buses, so they had to ride on a donkey" — Koch links the journey to the Promised Land to the formation of a new company and a corporate culture.

As ever, there is the odd nugget of unintentional humour. "Moses never read *The One Minute Manager*. In a way this was a serious handicap."

MARTIN WALLER



Profit without honour — Moses, by Michelangelo, an unlikely management guru

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Mortgage rates for new borrowers were effective from 22 December 1998

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THE TIMES UNITE TRUST INFORMATION

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New group for small businesses launched

By Rodney Hobson

A RIVAL to existing small business organisations, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Forum of Private Business and the Small Business Bureau, has been set up by a management expert.

Jim Barrington, based on Merseyside, says he formed the Association for Small Businesses to offer the commercial benefits that he says he could not find in other small business organisations. However, he wants to build networks with the other bodies for mutual advantage.

Mr Barrington has spent most of his working life in business, including spells with training and enterprise councils and Business Links.

He is now managing director of the Barrington Group, a Merseyside management consultancy.

Mr Barrington said that, when he was seeking ways in which small enterprises could be helped, he found that Business Links worked for well-established companies and that existing business bodies concentrated on lobbying, surveys and other services.

"I wanted an organisation that would save me money or help me to find a contract," he said.

He approached large companies and found they wanted to introduce themselves to small businesses and would give good discounts to win their custom.

So he set up the association to obtain bargaining power for small businesses. "We act as an introduction agency or a corporate buyer," said Mr Barrington.

Insurance companies discount their policies, Dun & Bradstreet, the business information company, offers a 17 per cent reduction and the Royal Mail has given sponsorship and provides training on the economic use of postal services.

"The other organisations have their own strengths," said Mr Barrington, "so I want to form alliances with them and network through them. I want us all to work together."

The association has a free newsletter and business guide, and is to set up a website to raise awareness.

Mr Barrington used his own money to start the association, but has introduced annual membership fees of £19.99 for small businesses and £34.99 for large companies. Businesses that recruit members receive a percentage of their subscription. Inquiries: 0151-522 0874.

Giftware firm learns to make the most of colleges' talent

Sally Watts views a family enterprise with a methodical approach to growth

Gifts galore, from ceramics and glassware to sweat-shirts and baseball caps, helped to make the Christmas just gone the best so far for Custom Print Merchandise (CPM), a small Welsh family business that began in 2,000 square feet of premises in Cardiff in 1986.

For most of this time, the business has relied just on T-shirts and sweatshirts, printed in-house. However, in the past four years, drawing on the skills of young graduates, a student and academic departments, it has taken off, expanding both markets and range.

"A company can only grow by extending its product range — retailers prefer this as it's cost-effective," says Paul Dinnick, managing director of CPM, who founded the business with his wife, Mary, now financial controller, and sister, Cynthia, her assistant. "Today we are probably the only company in Britain that is designing, printing and decorating textiles, ceramics and glassware in-house. This is why we targeted exports."

After establishing CPM, Mr Dinnick — whose background is in marketing — decided that it was time to expand and that, to do so, he needed to establish three middle-tier roles, including a design studio manager and a market-



Paul Dinnick with T-shirts produced by his CPM giftware business, whose exports have grown rapidly

ing executive "to put flesh on the skeleton".

However, he did not act instantly. Preferring to move forward in a "planned, evenly paced way", he applied to take on graduates, or Associates, through the Teaching Company Directorate (TCD). These, attached to the University of Central England (UCE), worked with the backing of Michael Vernon, head

of textiles, and his department, which he says has benefited hugely from the knowledge and experience gained.

One Associate, Emma Wilson, carried out a business review, set up the nucleus of a marketing strategy, planned a brochure and researched potential export outlets. Another, Paul Mayfield, helped to introduce computer-aided design

and four-colour process separation techniques.

With UCE's help, Mr Dinnick invested £35,000 in a design studio equipped with four Apple Macintosh computers, scanners and printers. He took on a design manager, Barry Barnfield, previously in silk-screen printing, and Julie Worrell, with a publishing background, as marketing executive.

The business is also benefiting from a much newer TCD scheme, College-Business Partnerships, which links companies with colleges of further and higher education. Erwan Stephens, who has an Ordinary National Diploma in engineering and is working on day release for the Higher at Barry College, is replacing CPM's card index system with computerised management information for production planning, delivery dates and rush orders. This will lead to the third key role: production planning manager.

All this is paying off. Turnover has more than doubled to £2.8 million. The size of premises has increased to 20,000 square feet after several moves. Staff have increased from 17 to 50, plus some 30 outworkers sewing and packing. Paul Dinnick's brother, Ralph, has joined CPM as production manager and Paul's son, Martin, who started at the bottom seven years ago, is now sales manager.

Exporting began to grow rapidly in 1998, partly as a result of exhibiting at Birmingham's export fairs. In a separate initiative, CPM won a contract to supply giftshops on a US fleet of cruise ships.

As well as duty-free shops and tourist attractions, the home market includes Liberty, Hamleys, Bhs, and Edinburgh Woollen Mills. Souvenirs will be on sale at the rugby World Cup in Cardiff this year.

Paul Dinnick says: "We're creating our own niche in the market. We're also looking at investors in People, to develop staff skills for meeting the needs of tomorrow."

CPM: 01222 346434

Storey calls for state aid for training at SMEs

(£30,000) for small business research. This is seen as the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for small business and has never before been won by anyone from outside the US.

Individual workers who receive training, he said, are more likely to obtain employment and, once employed, to earn more. This benefits both the workers and the State, but it is not clear that small firms that train more perform better. "It seems reasonable that

they should be compensated for any costs they incur in training their workers."

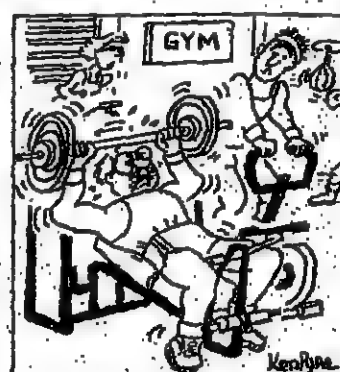
In a business with an owner and a single manager, Professor Storey suggested that the owner is unlikely to fund the manager's training, as the latter can only gain promotion by changing jobs — at the owner's expense.

Entrepreneurs, he went on, learn by doing, solving actual problems as they occur. "Entrepreneurs and managers in small businesses

appear to learn most effectively in a highly experiential manner. They are unlikely to learn through formal classes and instead require 'bite-sized chunk' answers to real problems which they are currently experiencing."

Professor Storey also urged governments to collate their vast amounts of information, of value to small firms, and to create "information intermediaries" — whether state-subsidised or not, which would draw on data bases to handle questions on tax, legislation and such like. Owners need immediate answers, lacking time to absorb massive detail.

His final recommendation was for a new approach to business failure, such as exists in the US, which regards failure as "a chance event" that provides experience and can lead to success.



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TENDERS AND CONTRACTS

THE GATEWAY TO WORK

Private/Voluntary Sector Led Pilots

The Government has announced the piloting of the Single Work Focused Gateway (SWFG) to the benefits system for all working age claimants. A radical DfEE-DSS initiative to help people back into work rather than writing them off to life on benefit, the SWFG will provide a streamlined and efficient system in which there is a single point of access to welfare, and in which everyone who has the potential to work is provided with help to find it.

Wishing to tap into the expertise, innovation and efficiency that the private and voluntary sectors can offer, the Government is inviting bids, led by private and/or voluntary organisations, in four pilot areas:

Suffolk
Leeds
North Nottinghamshire
North Cheshire

Successful applicants will be expected to work in partnership with the Benefits Agency, Employment Service, local authorities and other relevant bodies to ensure a seamless and high quality service.

These pilots will start in November 1999. Contracts will be for up to three years with the possibility of extension for up to a further two years. Private/voluntary sector organisations which are interested in leading any of these pilots, or would like to find out more, are invited to express their interest now. The closing date for expressions of interest is 22nd January 1999.

A briefing pack will be despatched on request to interested organisations. This will provide further information about the pilots, details of the information events and of the procurement process. Information events will be held from mid-January 1999, when organisations can find out more, talk to others about what might be involved and explore how they may wish to work with each other collaboratively to deliver this initiative.

The briefing pack also sets out the information which must be submitted by organisations interested in proceeding in the competition, against which a shortlist will be established. The information requested in the briefing pack must be returned by noon 12th February 1999 in order to be considered.

To find out more and/or request a briefing pack, please contact Helen Carey at the address below:

Single Work Focused Gateway Project, Level 4 Mayfield Court, 56 West Street Sheffield, S1 4EP. Tel: 0114 259 7070. Fax: 0114 259 7266.

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THEATRE



Cast out of sad memory

GALLERIES: Richard Cork interprets the haunting shapes and shadows that dominate new London exhibitions by Rachel Whiteread and Kerry Stewart

Looking at the year ahead I am relieved to predict that Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial will be among the outstanding art events. For too long the project looked doomed. Endlessly postponed and mired in the murky strife of Austrian politics, her monumental sculpture is now scheduled for unveiling in the late autumn. I hope to be there to see how this steel and concrete structure relates to its sensitive context: the Judenplatz in Vienna, the ancient heart of the city's beleaguered Jewish community.

Maquettes and photographs of the Memorial in situ show an austere, sealed-up building, its rigidly ordered sides resembling library walls facing outwards. But Whiteread's latest exhibition, her first at the Anthony d'Oilly Gallery, brings the full-scale physical impact of the Memorial much nearer. Walking into the largest gallery, we see three double-sided bookshelves in white plaster. Pacing down the corridors between them is akin to entering the Holocaust Memorial and finding, with a shock, that the shelves within have been shorn of the books that once filled them.

Not that Whiteread stresses the emotive charge of the

stripped shelves. She simply cast *Untitled (Book Corridors)* in negative, making the spaces between each shelf just out as solid presences. But the void where the books should sit has the capacity to unsettle, making us wonder why they seem to have been destroyed.

Memories are triggered of the book burnings undertaken

'One is reminded of the Nazis' book burnings'

by the Nazis, who knew only too well how to erase history. Despite everything achieved by computer technology and the Internet in recent years, books are still the prime repository of knowledge, and the sight of Whiteread's denuded shelves is bound to provoke an indignant sense of loss.

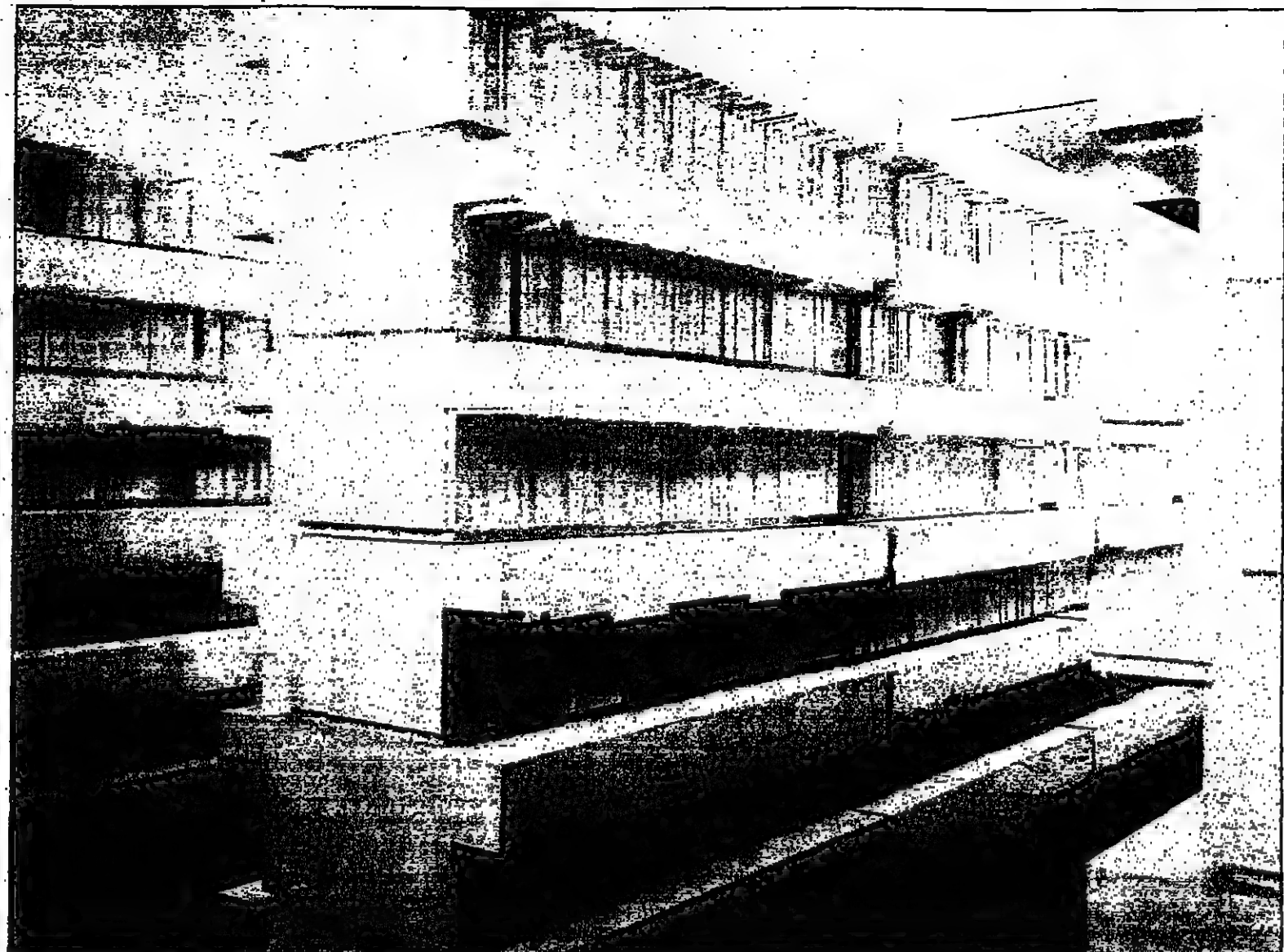
Books can also be intimate objects, especially when found in homes where they are re-

ferred to all the time. In this respect *Untitled (Book Corridors)* relates to Whiteread's consistent preoccupation with domestic forms. Ever since she found her identity as an artist by casting a wardrobe, making it into a place redolent of both privacy and fear, this remarkably single-minded sculptor has stayed close to the household environment.

The most seductive exhibit in her impressive d'Oilly show, *Untitled (Fiction)*, is a smaller work where three bare shelves project from the wall like a relief. This time, Whiteread allows the missing books to leave discreet stains of bleached yellow, red, green and blue on the plaster. They soften what would otherwise be a formidably severe piece, and disclose her subdued yet lyrical feeling for colour.

Throughout the rest of the survey, she reins in sensuousness and opts instead for red-ness and pallor. The whiteness of the tripartite *Untitled (Elongated Plinths)* accentuates the funeral aspect of these low-lying slabs. They call to mind the sterile surfaces where corpses might be laid out for clinical examination.

Unlike the brittle and pillaged *Book Corridors*, though, all three plinths are cast in plastic and appear inviolate. But this bland, pristine quality



Rachel Whiteread's *Untitled (Book Corridors)*: the void where the books should be prompts onlookers to wonder why they seem to have been destroyed

does not make them reassuring. They are as bound up with mortality as Whiteread's earlier *Bath* sculptures, and prove that her imagination is still strongly affected by a graveyard melancholy. She never allows this obsession to become mawkish or self-indulgent, however. The prevailing emphasis in the

show rests on emotional control, and Whiteread's characteristic rigour is seen at its toughest in *Untitled (Nine Tables)*. The cast concrete employed here reminded me of the equally grey substances she used in *House*, the most inexcusable and mourned victim of the British weakness for vandalising contemporary art.

At first, it would be easy to see this new sculpture as nine fragments from the bulldozed *House* itself, each rounded into an identical form as compact as a heavy suitcase. In reality, they are cast from the empty spaces underneath stacking tables, the kind of nondescript furniture found in any large institution.

But by the time Whiteread has carried out her deceptively straightforward strategy these banal, utilitarian objects have been transformed into strangely unnerving presences. They rest on the floor in ranks, like anonymous tombs in a cemetery. Their origins as tables can only be guessed at, for Whiteread has brought about a thoroughgoing, infinitely enigmatic metamorphosis.

The glacial feeling of death running through this show also pervades the most memorable of Kerry Stewart's exhibits at the Stephen Friedman Gallery. The largest room is inhabited by one sculpture. Peering into the darkened space, we gradually make out the spectral shape of a car. It has been covered in snow, and the coat of frozen particles threatens to obliterate all the remaining identifiable features.

Since the window-panes are smothered, no one can tell whether the driver or passengers remain inside. But the possibility of their incarceration intensifies when we realise that the wheels are paralysed in a piled-up snowdrift. The vehicle seems long since abandoned, and yet the misgivings about continued human occupancy are strengthened by the eeriest aspect of the sculpture: the headlights obsti-



Kerry Stewart's icy 'car' sculpture: hinting at the disturbing possibility of incarceration

nately shining through their clogged glass shields.

Partially obscured, they nevertheless make the car seem even more of a lethal prison cell than before. Although we can walk right round this sculpture, deftly made from acrylic-painted fibreglass, it resembles in the end a traumatic still from a frustrating, nightmarish movie by the Coen brothers or David Lynch.

The human figure, so often the basis of this young Scottish sculptor's earlier work, is no more visible in her other large exhibit. Stewart gives scant indication of who or what might be lurking beneath *Untitled (Hairy Being)*. The title hints that some animate force waits inside this strange, surreal mass of straw-coloured raffia rising several feet in the air.

On one level, it smacks of the farmland: on another, a cascade of long, straggly hair. But neither animal nor tramp can be detected underneath the dishevelled tendrils. Like many of Stewart's previous

sculptures, the phantasmic quality of this apparition seems to belong to some childhood dreamworld. She is undoubtedly fascinated by the notion of viewing adult life through children's eyes, and a diary-like confession inscribed above the door leading to *Untitled (Hairy Being)* is written in an oddly unformed hand: 'I was living a sad life, always worried and anxious, with many fears. One day I decided to look up at the ceiling. Maybe it was the newness or the disorientation, but the lower down things couldn't get up that high.'

The words' curious blend of naivety and wry humour typifies Stewart's approach. Sadness is offset by self-mocking awareness of absurdity, and in this respect *Untitled (Hairy Being)* is a preposterous comic conceit. Its air of concealment, though, hints at a darker, more furtive and helpless meaning as well — an interpretation made more plausible when we encounter the third sculpture on view.

Crouching on the floor in a focal position, *Followers* finally allows the human form to be revealed. The barefoot young woman appears casual at first. The longer we look at her, though, the more we see. With knees drawn up tightly against her chest, and arms enclosing them in a defensive lock, she seems hunched rather than assured. The title of the sculpture implies that she is listening to a leader's speech. But the message makes her feel oppressed, not enlightened. Everything about the stance she adopts, and her stunned facial expression, suggests that she is in thrall to a domineering, perhaps ruthless, cult figurehead. Stewart's starting-point, apparently, was footage of the followers who blindly obeyed Charles Manson's murderous imperatives. So when this sculpture casts aside concealment at last, we only find someone incapable of releasing herself from an entrapment as cruel, in its psychological tyranny, as the snow-engulfed car.

● Rachel Whiteread at Anthony d'Oilly Gallery, 21-23 Dering St, London W1 (0171-494 1100) to Jan 15; Kerry Stewart at Stephen Friedman Gallery, 25-28 Old Burlington St, W1 (0171-494 1434) to Jan 23

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EDUCATION

Performers speak out

Give our children what we received

As a government committee ponders the sad state of arts education,

Simon Tait asks performers and writers how their own offspring fare

Music, says the opera singer Lesley Garrett, is an expression of the community. "It's where I got my music from, in the heavy-industry communities of South Yorkshire. But school as a community is the essence of a child's life, so music must happen there." These days, however, it mostly doesn't. And with arts teaching taking an increasingly peripheral place in the curriculum and the number of specialist teachers dwindling, it is unlikely to. The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, was accused of betraying our creative talent when he announced a year ago that education would be centred on numeracy and literacy. He responded by setting up a committee for creative and cultural education, and commissioning Professor Kenneth Robinson to write a report on the place of the arts in the curriculum, which is expected later this month.

Artists themselves are rarely asked for an opinion, though, and many owe their careers — careers which contribute substantially to the £5 billion a year earned by the creative industries in Britain — to the influence of enlightened teachers. Today, according to a new report by the Royal Society of Arts, the chances of finding a cultural Mr Chips are becoming slimmer by the year. It's a point the Arts Council's education director, Pauline Tumbler, has been trying to get across as she works with curriculum planners and with Robinson. "Young children rarely say they can't paint or dance or sing, but many older people who have not been encouraged to be creative are negative about their own abilities," she says. Garrett was lucky: there

were professional musicians in her family, and she went to a school specialising in creative teaching, so that German and French lessons were peppered with music and art as well as language. "I would not be doing what I am if it wasn't for that school," she says.

For her own children, Jeremy, five, and Chloe, four, at nursery school in North London, she had to find and pay for education with the creative input she wants for them. "In my day, creative work often happened out of school hours. I couldn't wait for 4 o'clock when there would be rehearsals for the play or the choir. Now teachers have such a struggle with paperwork that they don't have time."

The composer Howard Skempton's Birkenhead choir school taught him music, and his 13-year-old son Sam goes to a comprehensive where the arts are an important part of the curriculum. "But emphasis on the arts is entirely dependent on the enthusiasm of the head teacher," he says. "It is ridiculous that he has to sacrifice something else in order to include something which should be fundamental."

Tony Haygarth, the actor familiar from many television series including the current *Where The Heart Is*, left school at 15 to become a fruit porter, but he had had the benefit of an enlightened head teacher who introduced him to Shakespeare and organised theatre outings. His children are Becky, 12, and Katie, 14. Recently he joined them on an outing from their Tunbridge Wells school to see a travelling theatre company known for education work. "It was a Hungarian play, inappropriate for kids, we couldn't follow the

plot, and the teachers weren't properly prepared," he says. "The importance of creative teaching in school is simple. All animals have five senses, but we have a sixth sense that recognises beauty. If you don't teach children how to use that ability, you're shutting them out of a natural entitlement." The sculptor Antony Gormley says Blunkett's move had "seriously disillusioned" arts and music teachers. But the RSA report, *The Disappearing Arts*, shows that they were, already disillusioned: last year recruitment for teaching art is down 12 per cent, and for music 23 per cent.

"All education should always have creativity integrated as a leading force because it teaches people who they are, and helps them in getting to know how they can explore themselves visually," he says. "It could be in dance, performance, music, it doesn't matter if it isn't painting, but creativity is at the core of learning." He sends his children, Ivo, 16, Guy, 13, and Paloma, 11, to a progressive fee-paying school in Golders Green. "It's arts teaching leaves much to

be desired," he says. "If I knew of a school that took it seriously I might move them, but do you know of one? It's not enough to have teachers who can teach the arts. We should have artists who can teach." Gormley's fellow Royal Academician, the painter and engraver Christopher Le Brun, also sends his children, Luke, 14, Lily, 12, and Edmund, 8, to a Dulwich fee-paying school which has a reputation for design teaching. "Lily is a good artist," he says. "But there's very little painting or drawing. It's been

a huge disappointment. The value of design is demonstrable, but you can't demonstrate the value of fine art so it is seen as secondary to design. But fine art is the primary art, not definable by words. The cultural industries in this country have never been bigger, while the standards of drawing have never been weaker." The novelist Jim Crace's two children, Tom, 17, and Lauren, 12, are at Birmingham comprehensive. He went to Enfield Grammar School where the most up-to-date literature for study was Lawrence's *Seven*

Pillars of Wisdom, whereas Tom is currently reading Atwood and Heaney. But narrative is not taught. Crace believes that learning narrative is vital. "The human being is the only animal that can recall the past and imagine the future, and you become socially successful if you have a narrative sense, because then you are able to talk. You can get through life without mental arithmetic, but not without a narrative sense. To ignore these chambers of children's minds and hearts is a huge mistake."

CLASSICAL CDS

The best of Rodrigo

BUILDING A LIBRARY
A guide to the best classical recordings, in conjunction with BBC Radio 3

RODRIGO'S CONCIERTO DE ARANJUEZ
Reviewed by David Blackwell
BACK in 1971 Geoff Love, otherwise known as Manuel and the Music of the Mountains, added a gentle rhythm track and a heavenly choir to the famous tune from the second movement of Rodrigo's 1939 guitar concerto and found himself with a hit in the pop music charts. It has been called the most popular of all 20th-century concertos, and there is even a version for harp, though unlike the gentle rhythm track of the pop version, the harp version was in fact arranged by Rodrigo himself.

A musical response to the beautiful parks of the Aranjuez palace that lies between Madrid and Toledo in Spain, this piece is so skilfully orchestrated that it almost plays itself. Performances fail only when the guitar dominates the complementary orchestral details or takes liberties with Rodrigo's carefully indicated instructions.

Julian Bream has made four recordings. The best is from 1974 with John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Orchestra and if you are looking for a mid-price version, this is the one to go for. But Bream's approach is more strident than Goran Söllscher with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, which is one of the better full-price versions. Söllscher's approach is equally disciplined but much gentler, but unfortunately the overall orchestral tone is not as mellifluous as it could be.

Pepe Romero with Neville Martinson and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields is a close contender, but Romero is less disciplined and self-effacing than John Williams with the Philharmonia under Louis Frémaux (Sony Classical SK 3748, £15.99). Williams' tone is resonant but beautifully mellow, nothing is over-emphasised in his account, orchestral details are clearly enunciated and the overall texture of the Philharmonia under Frémaux wins on warmth, balance and clarity.

To order the recommended recording, with free delivery, please send a cheque payable to The Times Music Shop to FREEPOST, SCO681, Forbes, 1/36 OBR or phone 0345 023 498; e-mail: music@the-times.co.uk

Next Saturday on Radio 3 (11am): Debussy's *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*



Lesley Garrett, opera singer: "These days teachers have such a lot of paperwork to do that they often don't have time for out-of-hours cultural activities"

THEATRE: The Cardboard Citizens company plays to a select audience — the homeless. Hettie Judah reports

Get your big issues here

Issue-based theatre is not generally a term to thrill audiences: the idea of being trapped in a darkened room and being ranted at by a group of performers with an axe to grind is probably most people's idea of entertainment hell. As a result, most productions with a point to make tend to end up preaching to the converted; one is unlikely to clamour to see a satire on contemporary environmental policy if one is a member of a forest-pulping lobby group, for instance.

None of this would really matter if the world were a perfect place populated by a

thoughtful citizenry, but the fact is that we would all benefit from having our complacent worldview shaken up from time to time. Theatre is an ideal medium for such provocation, but how to use it without resorting to didacticism?

The answer, according to the Brazilian theatre guru Augusto Boal, is to develop a form of theatre based around inclusivity rather than alienation; to let the stage become a forum in which the audience

becomes part of the action, and, by extension, part of the solution. A necessarily tragic scenario is presented, and the "spectators" are invited to intervene at any point and attempt to change the course of the action for the better by taking the part of the central character. So successful has this idea, become in Brazil that Boal has developed a form of legislation based on forum theatre, essentially placing the law-making process in the hands of the people.

Boal visited Britain last month to display his legislative theatre to a packed audience. While the demonstration worked on one level — intervention was enthusiastic and laws were "passed" by the bucketload — the whole spectacle left a rather unpleasant taste in one's mouth. Instead of becoming an arena for debate, the hall succumbed to what was essentially mob rule because the audience, which consisted almost entirely of middle-class, liberal, white North Londoners, was in consensus on almost every issue raised; anti-Osted, pro-pedestrianisation and so on. The exercise became so terrifyingly tribal that it seemed rather an argument against democracy than for it.

The trick to pulling off forum theatre is in getting the balance right: entertaining enough to hold an audience, difficult enough to provoke them and located in such a way that a variety of opinions are elicited from a diverse group of people. One company that manages to do this with considerable aplomb is Cardboard Citizens, which has just completed its twelfth national tour in seven years.



Cardboard Citizens: Neil Brennan (left) and Dele Adagunodo

You probably wouldn't have heard of any of the cast, the company's texts are not available from all good bookshops, and it is very unlikely that you will either have seen the tour advertised or managed to catch a show. Cardboard Citizens is a homeless people's theatre company that plays to homeless, day centres and cold weather shelters during the winter months. Not only does it play to a homeless audience, but the company is constituted entirely of actors who are or have at one point been homeless.

that cannot be solved in any one particular way. They stimulate a variety of responses from their audiences, many of whom were not particularly sure that they wanted to be there in the first place. "People share information, strategies and experiences," says the director, Adrian Jackson. "If people are in a situation they have seen in a show they then have a palette of possibilities from which to choose; what Boal called 'a rehearsal for reality on the stage'. The act itself of stepping on the stage gives people a sense of possibility that they might intervene more in their own life; they also realise that they are not alone. It gives them solidarity to work together to crack a problem, but it doesn't work if it's not decent entertainment."

Entertaining it certainly is: at the St John at Hackney Day Centre Cardboard Citizens' performance started in the kind of atmosphere that would have had most professional actors running for the door. Conversation continued around the Formica tables, arguments raged, people wandered in and out and obscene shouts were hurled at the stage. And then the magic started to happen: within ten minutes the room had almost gone quiet, and by the end people were earnestly shouting out suggestions and taking to the stage with enthusiasm and considerable comic enjoyment.

Without question the company's background helps its players to inspire a certain amount of respect in its audiences, but the real success comes through encouraging people to think, rather than ordering them about. "At its best we start a debate and leave that debate behind us for a few days," Jackson says. "People don't instantly forget a visit by Cardboard Citizens."

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Time to take a big step up by joining this well-known medium-sized City firm as number two in its venture capital group. A following, while advantageous, is not vital, but good experience acting for management teams or venture capitalists is. How you go on from here will be very much up to you. Ref: T60987

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

To £Flexible
It's no wonder so many lawyers are moving into professional support, when top 10 City firms like this one offer attractive salary packages in return for flexible working and no more time sheets. Ideal if you have experience of pensions, corporate, banking, employee incentives or competition. Ref: T22448

CORPORATE TAX

To £75,000
Solid proof of how desirable quality corporate tax lawyers are. This top 20 US firm offers an amazing all round package, including City-busting salary, if you have 0-4 years' High-quality ppe. Working with one of the leading names in international tax, the only way from here is up. Ref: T61033

CONSTRUCTION LITIGATION

To £55,000
Whether you are a 2-5 years qualified construction litigator, or a general commercial litigator with some construction experience and enthusiasm to specialise, this top 10 City firm is ideal, as it has the client base and back-up to ensure you gain all the skills you need to guarantee a great future. Ref: T22669

DEFENDANT INSURANCE/MEDICAL NEG

To £250,000
One of the country's leading NHS, medical and professional negligence practices is looking to build up its expertise in its London office, meaning defendant insurance and medical negligence specialists with 1-2 or 4-5 years' ppe will quickly find themselves noticed and rewarded. Ref: T61246

PROPERTY

To £50,000
Commercial property lawyers with 3-4 years' ppe will be given their head in this focused niche firm, which will probably bring you in as a partner and ensure your pay reflects your status. Good hours and a supportive atmosphere go some way to explaining why hardly anyone leaves here. Ref: T36307

EMPLOYMENT

To £2Partner
Few firms have as high a profile as this top London practice, and that is reflected in the quality of its work, which an employment partner will find to be precedent-setting, challenging, interesting and often in the news. This is an exciting opportunity to build up a practice which compares favourably with any other. Ref: T44274

IP/IT

To £150,000
This niche City firm boasts one of the best IP/IT practices around, and represents an outstanding opportunity for a non-contentious partner keen to join a firm which will give you the freedom to develop as you want. A following is not essential, although the firm would be interested in a team. Ref: T60180

RANKING

To £52,000
This medium-sized City firm is renowned for giving its lawyers unparalleled training, development, responsibility and pay, and, as a result, has one of the lowest turnover rates around. A banking lawyer with 2-4 years' ppe will also enjoy a broad mix of banking and financing work, including PFI. Ref: T47885

CORPORATE/COMMERCIAL

To £55,000
With Spain and Latin America becoming increasingly important markets, this unique top 10 City firm offers an outstanding future to a corporate/commercial lawyer with excellent language skills, or Spanish lawyers who have qualified. Your expertise should guarantee rapid promotion. Ref: T60306

EMPLOYMENT

To £58,000
The national firm's London office has a breadth of clients second to none and a similar commitment to ensuring its lawyers enjoy a high degree of responsibility for them. If you are an employment lawyer with 0-4 years' contentious and non-contentious ppe you will have every chance to progress your career. Ref: T60696

For further information, in complete confidence, please contact Nick Shilton, Sarah David or Gavin Sharpe (all qualified lawyers) on 0171 405 6082 (0171 385 7017 or 0141 506 515 evenings/weekends) or write to them at QD Legal.

email: shilton@qdggroup.co.uk
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YAHOO!

Commercial/Multi-media Lawyer

2-4 years' ppe

London

Established in 1994 Yahoo! is a global internet media company, headquartered in California, with 15 international offices outside the US. It is the single largest navigational guide in terms of traffic, advertising, household and business user reach and is one of the most recognised brands associated with the Internet providing services to millions of users daily. Yahoo! UK is the London office responsible for the www.yahoo.co.uk site (which is visited by over 90% of UK Web searches) and other local UK Yahoo! properties.

Continued success and growth means that the London office seeks a multi-media lawyer. Working closely with the Managing Director and reporting to the Legal Director, Europe the successful individual will have 2-4 years' ppe with articles and at least 2 years' ppe spent in private practice. You will need a strong IP and/or IT background, broad company/commercial experience and highly developed drafting skills. In addition, you will need to be commercially astute, with an enthusiasm for, and highly developed awareness of, the demands of the Internet business. The ability to learn quickly and think effectively on your feet are essential. This is a rapidly growing company and the successful individual will be required to assist in the management and co-ordination of HR issues in the UK.

This is a unique opportunity for the right individual to make a contribution to the growth of an entrepreneurial company, which in return, can offer you the chance to develop key commercial skills and grow your career within a dynamic and ever growing new business. Remuneration includes benefits and stock options.

For further information, in complete confidence, please contact Kate Sullivan on 0171 405 6082 (011 305 515 evenings/weekends) or write to her at QD In-House Legal.

email: katsullivan@qdggroup.co.uk

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A NEW YEAR A NEW CONTRACT

ENTERTAINMENT

Top media practice of major City law firm needs solicitor for 3-6 month contract. Will have 2-4 years' ppe in TV and film work concentrating on production, distribution agreements and IP rights. To start immediately. Ref: 60607

COMMERCIAL CONVEYANCING

Northern office of building society needs a team of four solicitor/legal executives to assist with large commercial conveyancing business. Immediate start for 6 month contract. Ref: 61178

COMPLIANCE

Financial institution requires lawyer 1-5 years' ppe to work within the compliance and legal department. Must have recent IMRO experience. 2 month contract to start immediately. Ref: 61298

PLANNING/ENVIRONMENT

Highly regarded planning and environment team of this major City firm urgently requires solicitor 1-5 years' ppe for immediate start. To assist with heavy workload whilst looking permanent. Ref: 61336

COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS

Engineering company seeks 2-8 years' qualified solicitor/barrister for office based in Wiltshire. Candidates must have experience of large scale contracts as well as a strong personality and the ability to work on an unsupervised basis. 6 month contract to start as soon as possible. Ref: 61211

PENSIONS KNOW-HOW

Major international law firm needs pensions solicitor/barrister to perform support role for 6 month maternity leave. Must have 3-5 years' ppe to deal with employee benefits and pensions work. To start February. Ref: 60942

ENERGY/PROJECTS

Top City firm seeks 2-5 years' qualified solicitor with experience of energy work in particular oil and gas, electricity and power generation. Must be a confident drafter to work on an independent basis. To assist with burgeoning workload. Ref: 60734

PROPERTY LITIGATION

Commercial firm seeks property litigator to start as soon as possible for a 6 month maternity leave cover. 2-6 years' ppe solicitor. Must have up to date experience. Ref: 60780

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

Leading City of London firm requires commercial property solicitor 4+ years' ppe. Maternity leave cover to start January until October. Will be dealing with, landlord and tenant issues. Ref: 21488

COMMERCIAL LITIGATION

Leading international City firm seeks 2-5 years' qualified solicitor to work on a contract basis for up to 18 months. Recent experience of product liability work essential. Immediate start. Ref: 61247

COMMERCIAL

FMCG company based in West London needs solicitor/barrister 2-4 years' ppe for 6 month contract. IT experience preferable especially knowledge of development and distribution agreements. Challenging role with international work. Immediate start for 6 month contract. Ref: 61306

IT

Telecommunications company based in the South East requires solicitor/barrister for a 6 month contract. Work predominantly IT/telecoms, should have experience of maintenance agreements and facility management. 2-3 years' ppe to start immediately. Ref: 61257

For further information, in complete confidence, please contact Carl Freeman or Emma Anderson on 0171 405 6082 (011 305 515 evenings/weekends) or write to us at QD Special Project Lawyer.

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PARTNER AND SENIOR IN-HOUSE POSITIONS

Partner

Well established Lincoln Inn firm now seeks additional property partners to boost its already thriving practice. Client base includes property investors and developers as well as insurance companies, banks and retailers. Full range of commercial property work to currently undertaken and if you are a senior practitioner with a six figure following then the potential exists for you to join the happy ship. Ref: T30360H

Partner

If you have strong projects/infrastructure and/or construction experience and are feeling frustrated in your current position, this firm may have the answer. Our client, a major City and International firm, has a first class reputation in projects and PFI work, advising on both national and international infrastructure (channel tunnel rail link, schools, prisons, motorways) and global power projects; the team is going from strength to strength. Senior assistance with a corporate background wanting to diversify are also welcome. Ref: T30245JK

Partner

A leading venture capital firm with a strong, in-depth and rounded equity practice acting for equity providers, management teams and founders on new/emerging transactions is looking for a senior venture capital lawyer or existing partner to come in at senior or partnership level to boost its already strong and cohesive team. This is the time to move to this international large City firm when it is building its corporate teams in response to an increase in workload. Ref: T12294P

Partner

A US firm is looking for a US qualified partner/senior lawyer to head its small London office. This firm has the benefit of an association with a UK firm which will provide marketing opportunities but applicants should have a following of the contacts and personality to practice build. Candidates should have a corporate/commercial or finance background and have experience of working in Europe. Languages are an advantage. Ref: T30332N

Partner

Leading shipping firm is looking for a partner (wet or dry) to join its high profile and international shipping practice. The practice has excellent clients including some of the world's largest shipping and ship building companies. Candidates must have a six figure following and languages would be an advantage. Ref: T30394N

Partner

Reputable and forward thinking City practice is seeking an additional heavyweight insolvency partner with a contentious bias to join its small yet highly successful team. As an indication of reputation a following is essential. Excellent prospects in a firm which has seen an impressive growth rate both domestically and increasingly overseas. Ref: T30053L

10 Years+ PQE

A leading US investment house with a strong UK operation is looking to appoint a new head of its European compliance division. Integrated with the main legal department and based in London the candidate will ideally be both UK and US qualified and currently holding a senior position within another large investment house. Undertaking both legal and bank. Given the strong international flavour of this role languages would be an advantage. Ref: T30385E

6 to 10 Years PQE

A leading global IT services company with extensive operations both in the UK and overseas is looking to recruit a commercial lawyer. IT experience would be a distinct advantage but most important is a strong commercial background with an emphasis on M&A and JVs. Operating in a fast moving environment candidates will be used to working to tight deadlines and operating at a strategic level when required. Given the strong international presence of this company, languages would be a distinct advantage. Ref: T30225E

Excellent + Benefits

A leading global IT services company with extensive operations both in the UK and overseas is looking to recruit a commercial lawyer. IT experience would be a distinct advantage but most important is a strong commercial background with an emphasis on M&A and JVs. Operating in a fast moving environment candidates will be used to working to tight deadlines and operating at a strategic level when required. Given the strong international presence of this company, languages would be a distinct advantage. Ref: T30225E

Please contact Jonathan Walthley, Helen Bryant or Michelle Green (for private practice) or Julian Stone (for in-house) and Julia Martin (for Australia) on 0171 417 4400 (all qualified lawyers) or write to them at the London office of GARFIELD ROBBINS, 5 WORMWOOD STREET, LONDON EC2A 1HQ. For more information in complete confidence call Evesing/Weekends 0171 386 8161

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LAW



Dai Brennan, QC. "He wants everything done yesterday," a Bar source says. "He is very action-orientated. And he can be a bit waspish."

'Our profession will face great challenges'

A radical leads the Bar into 2000. Profile by Frances Gibb

Dai Brennan, QC, knows what it is like to be up against it. An advocate whose career has been busy with accident victims, he takes on big insurance companies and "wins damages" — sometimes record sums. But just as he was reaching the peak of his profession in the 1980s, illness struck and he lost his voice, a potentially disastrous blow for any advocate.

Mr Brennan fought to regain something of a whisper and now his husky croak is his hallmark. The croak will be heard often in coming months. This year, as the Bar moves through the final stages of its slow metamorphosis into a modern shape for the millennium, it falls to Mr Brennan to steer it through the upheaval.

Combative skills aside, he is well suited as successor to Heather Hallett, QC, as Chairman of the Bar Council. Both were State-educated. Mr Brennan, whose antecedents are Irish Roman Catholic, was born in Yorkshire. His parents ran a pub in Bradford and his family had no connection with the law. He is a long way from the old image of the upper-crust lawyer.

Mr Brennan has told the Bar Council last month that in 1999 "our profession will face challenges as great as any in the past". The reasons are threefold: the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, is committed to legal reform in his Access to Justice Bill; clients are more pressing and cost-conscious; and consumers expect quality.

The Bar, he says, has an abundance of talent, brainpower and energy. "It is therefore my firm belief that we must approach change with confidence and not timidity nor negative reaction." Mr Brennan is not short in the positive energy stakes. A Bar source says: "He wants everything done yesterday. He is very action-orientated. And he can be a bit waspish."

His background is in the North, outside Oxford or the inner circles of the Bar in

London. He was educated at St Brede's Grammar School in Bradford, and Manchester University, where he met Pilar, who is Spanish and a translator. They married and have four sons.

He and other colleagues broke new ground by setting up their own chambers (later joined by such names as Rodney Klean, QC). And Mr Brennan still roots for the regions and would like more work devolved, with High Court judges based there for three years or so at a time.

Gradually, he came to specialise in personal injuries and medical negligence work and the practice took him to London. Recently named "Simply the Best" in a survey in *Lawyer* magazine, Mr Brennan has made his name with a list of high-profile cases. These include acting for the plaintiffs in the HIV/haemophilia claims, which were settled for £15 million; for relatives in the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster; until recently, when he took up the chairmanship for the lung cancer victims in current tobacco litigation (on a "no-win, no-fee basis") and for the residents of Canary Wharf in an environmental claim that went to the House of Lords.

Mr Brennan speaks of his cases with passion. "When I win £3 million in damages for a brain-damaged child (as he did recently for Helen Edwards, a teenage brain-damaged when aged five, in an operation to remove a birthmark), they need every penny of it... and the Legal Aid Board recovers all its costs."

But he is realistic about the Government's reforms and chooses his battles carefully. The fight over extending rights of audience — the so-called Bar Wars,

which have dogged the past decade — are over. He comments: "I accept that the Government is determined to make these changes." Instead, he will focus on the Government's plans for increased state regulation of the profession. This, he believes, presents the biggest threat to the profession he has known. "It is wrong that the Government should have the sole power to determine who should prosecute, who should defend... who shall appear in court and how cases shall be paid for."

All this was being done, he says, with no statutory objectives as to how the new legal aid funding would be awarded. "Under the Bill, the Lord Chancellor is creating a huge amount of executive power, with no apparent means of testing it by judicial review." The Bar, with help from some of the judges, will fight hard to give judges a vote (with the Lord Chancellor) over such matters as rights of audience and rules of the profession. Mr Brennan says: "Why should Parliament have power to regulate the rules of the profession when MPs themselves need to be regulated by a Parliamentary Commissioner?"

Other changes include reforms to improve the entry arrangements to the profession: human rights initiatives, including a programme of school visits and a *Citizen's Guide to the Human Rights Act*; Kitemarks for chambers to improve standards; and continuing education for the Bar. "I am setting out my agenda for modernising the Bar," he says. "The Government wants to engage in radical change, and so do we. But we want it to keep up with us."

More difficult may be ensuring that the older rank and file keep up. But Mr Brennan can exhibit great charm. As one Bar source put it: "He will be showing them the medicine, and they won't like it. But they are going to have to take it."

Misuse of funds: civil servants who slip up

A new law is needed to control officials who transgress but a high degree of culpability must be established

When should elected councillors and paid officials be held criminally liable for their acts? At present, there is a vague and antiquated common law offence of misconduct in public office, which has an ill-defined and uncertain threshold for criminal liability, and which depends mainly on a series of very ancient cases.

Under the present law elected local councillors and paid officials of local government are also liable to a surcharge if they misuse their official positions. In early 1997, for example, the High Court ordered Dame Shirley Porter and another councillor to pay £27,023,376 to Westminster council on the basis that they had, "by wilful misconduct", caused a loss to the council of that amount, a decision which they are now challenging.

The surcharge remedy was looked at by the Committee on Standards in Public Life under Lord Nolan which produced a report in July 1997 recommending that consideration be given to the introduction of a statutory offence of misuse of public office, and asking for comments.

The standards committee drew attention to the strong views held in some quarters that whereas elected local councillors and paid officials of local government may be liable to a penalty surcharge in the event of losses to the taxpayer, no such penalty applies in any other area of public life. The surcharge remedy cannot be applied, for example, to government ministers, to civil servants, or to board members or officers of appointed bodies. The standards committee accepted this complaint, explaining that "no convincing reasons — indeed, no reasons at all — other than the accident of history have been put to us to justify this distinction". The committee was also concerned that a councillor or officer was at risk of being held liable for the entire loss in the case of relatively minor pieces of misconduct, but might not be made liable for much more serious misconduct that had not led to any loss.

In the *Westminster* case, the Divisional Court remarked that it was unsurprising that the committee had commented adversely on the fact that the auditor had acted as investigator, prosecutor and judge. The standards committee considered that the surcharge was a "wholly inappropriate procedure" and said that it "would not wish to extend or retain it". It believed that a new statutory offence should be defined in such a way as to reflect the common law offence of misconduct in public office and it asked for views on the proposals.

The committee concluded its paper by stating that it would be best if consideration of the details of how the legislation might be best framed were carried forward in consultation with the Law Commissioner

responsible for criminal law matters. This suggestion was accepted and it has been taken forward in this way, rather than as a conventional Law Commission project, and a new statutory offence has been proposed. It is being considered by an inter-departmental working group and a decision will be made by ministers on whether to take it forward and how to do so.

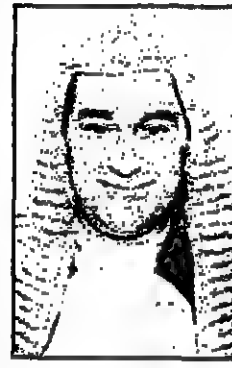
As a result of the helpful and thoughtful responses to the committee's paper, the suggestion is that there should be a new offence of misuse of public office for officials. Others are to decide precisely who will be bound by it.

The proposed offence would be based on an improper exercise of, or improper omission to, exercise a duty or power, and the threshold of liability would be set at a high level. Clearly, an act should be considered an offence only where a high degree of culpability has been established. To be convicted of the offence, a defendant would either have performed an unlawful act or made an unlawful omission which he or she knew to be unlawful; or alternatively, performed an act or made an omission which was improper according to the standards of any reasonable and honest holder of the defendant's office, as he or she was aware. Mere negligence or gross negligence, as opposed to knowing or conscious wrongdoing, simply would not suffice.

There is a very clear risk that an offence of this sort could be used for political purposes. At present, a private prosecution can be brought for the existing offence of misconduct in public office. Thus, under the present law, a member of the opposition on a local council could bring a private prosecution against, say, the council leader, just before an important election.

Clearly, the council leader's reputation and prospects could be seriously damaged by the mere fact that such a prosecution had been brought and even if the case were subsequently dismissed after the election, much harm might have been done in the meantime.

It seems appropriate, then, that no prosecutions for the new offence should be permitted to be brought without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This would also have the advantage that the DPP would have to bear in mind the public interest tests, which would require factors in favour of and against prosecution to be weighed up carefully and fairly. The result would be that the fear that prosecutions might be brought for minor and technical matters could be met.



STEPHEN SILBER, QC

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QUEEN'S COUNSEL

Stewart & Francis



In-House Lawyer

The British Olympic Association has the responsibility for taking the Great Britain Team to the Olympic Games, and also provides a wide range of technical and support services to the Olympic Governing Bodies.

The BOA Lawyer's primary area of responsibility relates to the legal aspects of the BOA's commercial activities. However, due to the diverse nature of the BOA's activities, the duties encompass many areas. The BOA Lawyer has responsibility for all legal issues which may arise within a busy and high profile organisation, prominent in both national and international sport.

We are seeking someone with 2-4 years post qualification experience and excellent inter-personal skills. General non-contentious commercial and intellectual property work would be a useful background.

Salary: Circa £35,000 plus benefits package

For further information, please write to Mrs J. Brewer, Personnel Manager, British Olympic Association, 1 Wandsworth Plain London SW18 1EH.

Fax No. 0181 871 9104.

Applicants will be asked to submit a CV, together with the names and addresses of two referees.

Closing date for applications: Monday 18th January 1999

Corporate/Commercial Lawyer

3-5 Years' Pqe

Germany

L&C Steinmuller GmbH is in the business of constructing international power stations and environmental plants worldwide. At 125 years old the Company last year enjoyed one of the most successful years of its history with a turnover of DM 1.92 billion. The company is European-based but has contacts and experience in growth markets such as the Far East, South Africa and Latin America. Deutsche Babcock AG will take over the majority of Steinmuller in 1999 and merge its own relevant activities with those of the company.

Anticipating continued development of energy and environmental markets across the world, Babcock and Steinmuller are seeking to make an important new appointment at the future joint headquarters - based in Oberhausen.

The Individual

You will be a corporate/commercial lawyer with 3-5 years' UK pqe and strong international experience, likely to have been gained in a City firm. Projects experience would be advantageous but it is not a pre-requisite. You will be an ambitious lawyer with a commercial approach and hands-on experience with reasonable written and spoken German language skills, plus English as your working language. An additional European language would be useful, preferably Spanish, but this is not essential.

Babcock and Steinmuller began by establishing a presence and client base across Germany. Responding to the demand in market prices for globalisation, a number of foreign subsidiaries and joint ventures have been set up. Through the quality and growth of its core business Babcock and Steinmuller consider Europe the gateway through which the company will launch into the global market of the future.

This is a fantastic opportunity to sharpen your skillset, joining a company at a turning point in its history. In addition to a competitive salary and benefits package, plus relocation assistance, you will receive intensive foreign language training and grooming for leadership.

For further information, in complete confidence, please contact Kate Sutcliffe on 0171 405 6062 (2555) 598 255 (evening/evening) or write to them at QD in-House Legal.

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BBC

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Commercial Legal Department
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Fixed-term contract. Based West London.

The BBC has recently formed a Technology Directorate which is designed to harness and co-ordinate all the BBC's technology requirements in an IT-driven environment. It is vital for the BBC, as for other complex organisations, that such requirements are underpinned by robust contracts.

The BBC's Commercial Legal Department, which is one of five specialist legal departments within the Legal Adviser's Division and which, amongst other functions, provides legal advice to the Technology Directorate, is now seeking a qualified lawyer with a minimum of 3-4 years' PQE to join its team, initially on a one-year fixed term contract.

The principal objective of the role will be to provide IT contract support to the senior lawyer in the department responsible for IT work. It will involve negotiation and drafting of IT contracts in all their guises, quality assuring external provision of legal advice, being the first point of contact on IT contract queries from other BBC directorates, advising on Y2K and similar event driven issues, and advising on the latest developments in IT law.

You will have extensive IT experience, an understanding of the commercial environment surrounding IT projects, be used to working on your own initiative - often under time pressure - and as part of a team. Excellent negotiation and interpersonal skills will be essential. A good track record in major IT projects would be an advantage.

For further details and an application form, contact BBC Recruitment Services (quote ref. 30363/T) Tel: 0181-740 0005. Minkom: 0181-225 9878. Postcard: PO Box 7000, London W12 8GJ. E-mail: recserv@bbc.co.uk Online: www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/30363.shtml Closes January 18th.

BBC

Working for equality of opportunity

TENANCY VACANCY

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Holiday

THE KEY ISSUE

HOW

Holidays: risks of the trade

British tour operators must be regulated, says Stephanie Trotter

This is the time of year when we dream of holidays in the sun. But the killing of tourists in Yemen last week has cast a brutal shadow on the notion of white sand, tropical seas and palm trees. Should holiday-makers take responsibility for choosing dangerous destinations? Does the fact that British tour operators organise holidays imply that they are safe? In the case of Yemen, was it enough that a warning had been issued of a high risk of kidnapping (although until then nobody had been killed)?

If we leave aside the tricky question of a possible cause of action against the Yemeni Government for alleged failure to pass on a message that British nationals were to be targeted, could the Foreign Office be sued if it acted negligently? The Crown Proceedings Act 1947, Section 2, allows actions to be brought in tort, but there is no apparent evidence of negligence.

Nev Johnson of the Foreign Office issues advice. We cannot actually stop people from travelling, but we will word it as strongly as possible. We say, "Don't go, in any circumstances". With Florida, we state that British tourists have been targeted for muggings there, but it is the only America state where we give advice.

"We never get involved with insurance. The prime information we use comes from our posts overseas. They advise us about how and when advice should be changed, and then we look at it in the broader perspective."

Package tours give the traveller a sense of security: the feeling that everything has been checked out, plus



A beach resort may look like the answer to your wish for a relaxing holiday. But has your tour operator discovered any potential pitfalls?

the added assurance of a company representative being on hand if things go wrong. However, on a Thomson holiday in Egypt, the tour representative was blamed by a holidaymaker, Sheryl Scarisbrick, who was seriously injured when she walking into a glass balcony door. She claimed that the rep failed to help her.

Clive Garner, a partner in Irwin Mitchell of Birmingham, which specialises in foreign illness and accident claims, says: "There has been a large increase in the past two years of accident claims against a wide range of tour operators."

"The largest group actions claim of its kind that we are involved with arises from illness among 600 people at an hotel in Majorca."

"More people are travelling abroad now, increasingly on all-inclusive holidays, and tour operators are going to more exotic locations,

which increases the risk of illness. If the infrastructure of the country is not developed, as is the situation in the Dominican Republic, there is an increased risk."

Mr Garner believes that consumers are more aware of their rights now and are more alert to the need to gather evidence and instruct specialist solicitors rather than pursuing claims on their own. "What has traditionally happened," he adds, "is that people who have suffered quite serious illness have been palmed off with ludicrously low levels of compensation. They have accepted low amounts because they have not been advised as to what the courts are likely to award."

Future holidaymakers should know that the arbitration service, run by the Association of British Travel

Agents, excludes personal injuries. The Package Travel Regulations 1992 enable holidaymakers to sue the tour operator for breach of the holiday contract, leaving the tour operator to recover against suppliers abroad —

An independent body could advise consumers and recommend experts

such as hoteliers. The combination of these regulations, which came into force six years ago, conditional fees ("no win, no fee") and the proliferation of video cameras, possibly explain the recent increase in litigation.

Brenda Wall of Holiday Travel Watch claims that about £60 million in compensation was paid out last year and that many more claims

are being processed or initiated. Will the holiday industry survive this level of attrition? Will lawyers continue to profit from these sad cases?

The easiest remedy is, to stop obvious dangers. For example, tour companies could select safer hotels, by cutting out accommodation with locked or blocked fire exits.

If rigorous selection can reduce risk, an independent holiday safety body should be set up to monitor holidays. Such a body could also advise consumers, recommend experts, operate a constant emergency helpline, investigate complaints and ensure that tour operators abide by a code of conduct. Funding could be from a modest levy.

This body could also press for safety measures. European directives, for example, on fire regulations and proper enforcement, and liaise

with the Foreign Office.

The Advertising Standards Authority ensures that advertisements are legal, decent, honest and truthful. Funded by a voluntary levy on industry, it works by publicising the trade's misdeeds — a penalty that could also work in the media-sensitive travel trade.

If the co-operation needed to raise holiday safety standards failed, then mandatory licensing and the setting-up of an "Ofot", with a regulator for holiday safety, could be imposed by statute.

But this should not be necessary. There should be an independent, funded body to make sure that unpleasant, sometimes life-threatening, holidays are stopped at source wherever possible. Responsible tour operators should be crying out for it.

● The author, a barrister and president of CO-Gas Safety, is vice-president of Consumer Safety International.

Homing in on a new lease of life

Complaints persist about poorly managed flats, says James Driscoll

The law governing leases of flats and houses needs fundamental overhaul and, indeed, one was recommended by the Law Commission in its report on commonhold. But despite legislative reforms from 1985 to the Housing Act 1996 (the last attempt), complaints persist about poorly managed flats. The Government has published a consultation paper, *Residential Leasehold Reform in England and Wales*. Commonhold will be the subject of more consultation. Meanwhile, views are sought on other legislative changes to the leasehold system.

A convincing case is made for

reforming the qualification rules for a flat-owner's collective right to acquire the freehold: flat-owners living over shops, restaurants or other business premises will be able to enfranchise if the non-residential floor area of the building does not exceed 25 per cent (10 per cent at present); the resident test will become easier (half of the acquiring flat-owners will need to be resident when giving notice to buy the freehold); and the minimum proportion of the enfranchising group will be one half, not two thirds.

Though these recommendations may make it easier to enfranchise, they will not surmount many of the practical hurdles revealed in research (*The Impact of Leasehold Reform*) commissioned last year by the Government. Take costs: flat-owners have little effective control over what they have to pay the current freeholder for professional costs — the paper rejects scale fees but welcomes suggestions. What about dispute settlement? Switching disputes from the county court to the Lease-

hold Valuation Tribunal has led to complaints about long delays and there are also complaints of freeholders taking further appeals to the lands tribunal to press flat-owners to settle. The paper's arguments for simplifying valuations may reduce delays, but it says little on the complexities of the statutory procedures. Why, for example, should an acquiring flat-owner have to make a county court application if the freeholder fails to respond to their notice to enfranchise? Without other changes, enfranchisement will remain an expensive, complex option for many flat-owners, which a well-re-

sourced landlord will continue to frustrate.

The Government's research also found that the main motivation for flat-owners wanting to enfranchise is dissatisfaction with the management of their block.

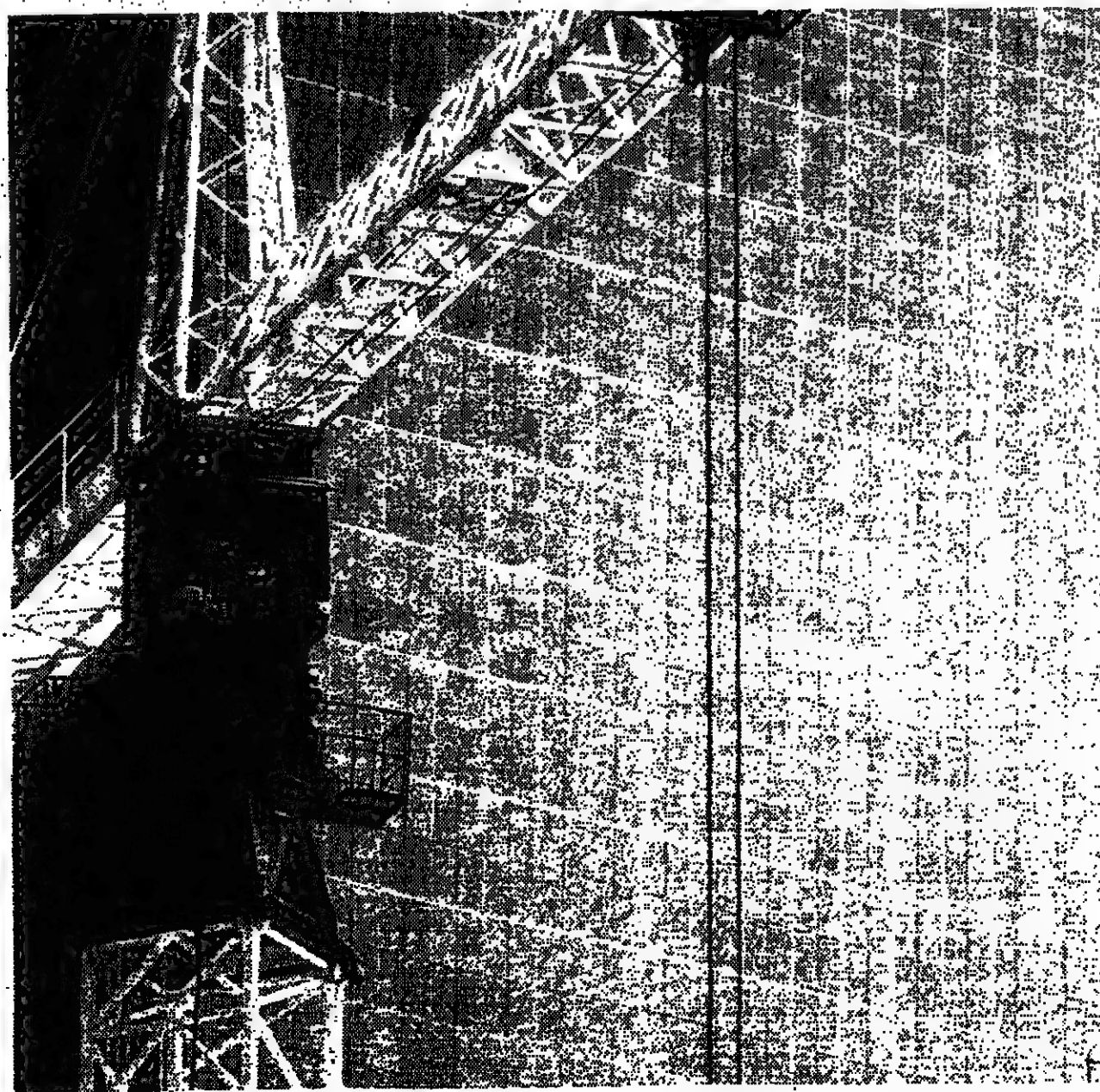
If implemented, the proposed new right for flat-owners to take over the management of the block is the paper's most radical proposal. The procedures will operate in much the same way as enfranchisement: no fault on the part of the landlord (or any existing managing agent) will have to be proved and the right can be exercised without application to a court or tribunal.

This consultation paper will not be the only consultation exercise before draft legislation. Separate consultations will be held on how to make flat-owners more aware of their rights and liabilities before purchasing. We can only hope that the Government will find the legislative time for further reforms.

● The author is Professor of Law at South Bank University, London, and a consultant solicitor with Trowers & Hamlin.

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CLIFFORD CHANCE

RUGBY UNION

Northampton eye opportunity to hit new heights

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

NORTHAMPTON will thank no one for pointing out that victory over London Irish at Franklin's Gardens this evening will place them at the head of English league rugby, an eminence they have never occupied before. First, because the Irish are among the most dangerous floaters in the first division and second because it only emphasises Northampton's lack of achievement since league rugby was introduced in 1987.

Yet this season they have found a consistency in the Allied Dunbar Premiership that has eluded them before, although in 1992 they made a brave assault on the title but ended behind Bath and Orrell.

There remains a lengthy race to be run and an uncertain future that may become clearer after scheduled meetings today, between the Rugby Football Union and representatives of English First-Division rugby, and Thursday, when the Welsh Rugby Union hopes to resolve the dispute

with Cardiff and Swansea. For the time being, however, Northampton are smelling of roses even though Matt Dawson, their England scrum half, seems likely to be absent this evening.

Dawson suffered a "dead leg" in the win over Sale at the weekend and Jim Branthall has been added to the squad, though Dominic Malone would play at No 9 in Dawson's absence. Ironically, when Northampton won at London Irish in October, it was their other England half

| TABLE | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|--------------|----|----|---|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Leicester | 14 | 11 | 0 | 3 | 251 | 228 | 22 |
| Northampton | 14 | 11 | 0 | 3 | 201 | 239 | 22 |
| Saracens | 15 | 10 | 0 | 5 | 261 | 289 | 20 |
| Worcester | 15 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 233 | 298 | 18 |
| Harlequins | 14 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 273 | 349 | 18 |
| Newcastle | 14 | 8 | 0 | 6 | 280 | 329 | 16 |
| Gloucester | 15 | 8 | 0 | 7 | 322 | 317 | 16 |
| London Irish | 15 | 8 | 0 | 7 | 281 | 381 | 16 |
| Bath | 14 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 249 | 287 | 14 |
| Richmond | 13 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 340 | 351 | 14 |
| Sale | 15 | 6 | 0 | 9 | 346 | 438 | 12 |
| London Scots | 14 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 282 | 382 | 8 |
| Bedford | 15 | 2 | 0 | 13 | 307 | 492 | 4 |
| W. Hantspool | 15 | 2 | 0 | 13 | 228 | 559 | 4 |

Newcastle prepare for loss of Ryan

By DAVID HANDS

NEWCASTLE yesterday acknowledged the imminent departure to Bristol of Dean Ryan, their Premiership-winning captain last season. Bristol will welcome him later this week but Rob Andrew, director of rugby at Newcastle, drew a line under the ten-year relationship he has enjoyed with Ryan, first at Wasps, then in the North East.

"I am very disappointed to see Dean leave the management team and I tried hard to keep him here," Andrew said. "However, I respect his ambitions and wish him every success." Newcastle remain tight-lipped, though, on speculation that Garath Archer, their England lock, could

follow Ryan when his contract ends this season.

Ryan's new position will be more clearly defined after an assessment of a neck injury that will determine whether he can play as well as coach. "I want to develop my career and Bristol have offered me an opportunity to combine playing, as well as a coaching management role," Ryan said.

Jason Barrett, the prop who joined Llanelli from Waikato less than two months ago, is on his way back to New Zealand after playing only four games. He is to join Auckland Blues, who will be without Olo Brown, the injured All Blacks tight-head prop, for the Super 12 tournament this year.

back, Paul Grayson, who was absent and his deputy, Alistair Hether, secured 16 points in a 26-10 victory.

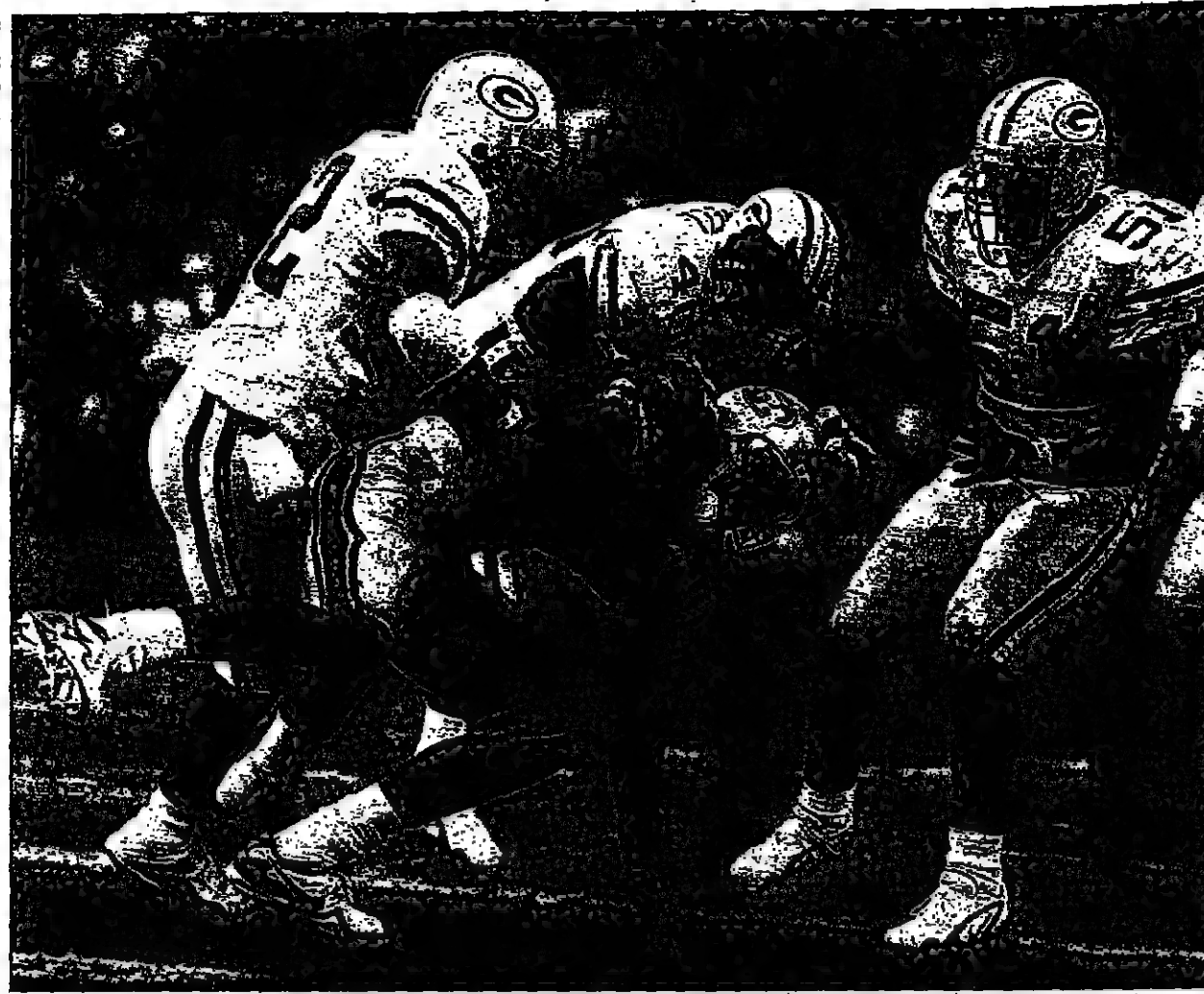
The Irish have undergone a facelift since then but catering for three games in nine days has forced Dick Best, director of rugby at Sunbury, to ring the changes in the hope that he has a full hand to choose from for the visit to Bristol on Sunday in the Tetley's Bitter Cup.

Although many key personnel remain, London Irish will be without Jarrod Cunningham, whose goalkicking has come to mean so much in so short a time. Instead, Niall Woods resumes the role that was his, both as wing and kicker, until Cunningham flew in from New Zealand.

Best has dispatched one of his young England-qualified fly halves, Matt Jones, on a month's loan to Saracens to help them through the absence of the injured Alain Penaud. Jones is likely to be a replacement for the game against Wasps at Loftus Road tomorrow while Paul Turner, the backs coach at Saracens, has cheerfully volunteered his services again at the age of 39 after coming on as a replacement for Gavin Johnson in the win on Sunday over Bedford, who make the lengthy trip tonight to Newcastle, where Michael Wood will make only his second Premiership start of the season on the wing. Rob Andrew, with a cup game against Bath on Saturday to consider, will give some of his Newcastle youngsters a run.

Unchanged Gloucester visit London Scottish while Bath, at Sale, will have Martin Haag at lock for the concussed Nigel Redman.

Although Bath supporters are suffering, Sale's would give just as much for a morale-boosting win. Their reshuffled pack saw Simon Raiwalui back at lock and Alex Sanderson, the younger of the brothers, at flanker, while Steve Diamond hooks so that Phil Greening can rest a damaged ankle.



Owens clings on to Young's last-ditch pass to earn the 49ers a dramatic victory over the Packers in San Francisco

Young's strike sends 49ers wild

By OLIVER HOLT

THEIR rivalry has become one of the fiercest in the National Football League (NFL). For the past three years the Green Bay Packers have trampled over the reputation of the San Francisco 49ers on their way to establishing themselves as one of the dominant forces in American football. On Sunday, the 49ers exacted their revenge.

The Packers, beaten by the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl last season, had been the clear favourites to progress beyond the second of the National Football Conference (NFC) wild-card games to a meeting with the Atlanta Falcons that would have moved them to within a step of another appearance in the end-of-season finale in Miami on the last day of this month.

It seemed as though they had achieved their goal when a touchdown pass from Brett Favre to Antonio Freeman took them into a 27-23 lead with less than two minutes remaining. But then Steve Young, the veteran quarterback who has been eclipsed

by the rise of Favre, seized control.

Young moved San Francisco 76 yards towards Packers territory in nine plays before he filled a pinpoint pass to Terrell Owens with three seconds remaining to give the 49ers a 30-27 victory.

"That catch is one of the big catches in the history of the organisation," Steve Mariucci, the San Francisco coach, said. "In some ways, we got a monkey off our back by finally beating the Packers. The way it happened makes it all that more exciting."

The catch was particularly satisfying for Owens, who had already dropped four passes and made a fumble. "I knew I had let the team down," he said, "but the guys stuck behind me and I stayed focused and it all worked out in the end. This is a very emotional day for me."

The first NFC wild-card match, on Saturday, had seen the Arizona Cardinals breeze past another fallen giant, the

Dallas Cowboys, 20-7. Jerry Jones, the Cowboys' controversial owner, stalked the touch-line looking bewildered at the inadequacies of his team.

If much of the weekend's attention centred on the hero-

PLAY-OFFS

SATURDAY
NFC Atlanta v San Francisco
AFC Denver v Miami
SUNDAY
NFC Minnesota v Arizona
AFC New York Jets v Jacksonville

ics of Young, though, there was also excitement at the continuing involvement of another faded quarterback, Dan Marino, after the Miami Dolphins pulled off a topsy-turvy victory over the Buffalo Bills.

After John Elway finally won a Super Bowl ring last season, Marino has become the most famous player never to have secured the sport's ultimate prize. Now, he will have to take the Dolphins past

Elway and the Broncos in Mile High Stadium on Saturday if he is to keep his hopes of winning the Super Bowl on home territory alive.

The Dolphins flirted with defeat against the Bills and with nine seconds left it seemed that Doug Flutie, the Buffalo quarterback, was on the verge of bringing the score level as he prepared to try to drive the Bills the final three yards into the Miami end zone. Then Flutie was sacked by Trace Armstrong, the Miami defensive end, the ball split from his hands and was recovered by Shane Burton to preserve Miami's 24-17 lead.

In the last of the four wild-card games, the Jacksonville Jaguars edged past the New England Patriots in Florida. Inspired by Fred Taylor, their rookie running back, who rushed for 162 yards in a 25-10 victory, the Jaguars will be a tough proposition for the New York Jets when they meet in New Jersey on Sunday, especially now that their quarterback, Mark Brunell, is back after injury.

Court of Appeal

Law Report Tuesday January 5 1999

Court of Appeal

Guidelines no longer valid

Regina v Wellman (Leslie Edward)
Before Lord Justice Rose, Mr Justice Roush and Mr Justice Johnson
[Judgment December 10]
When sentencing a defendant for an offence of indecent assault upon a child or young person the guidelines in *R v Domett* (1997) 2 Cr App R (S) were no longer valid.

The Court of Appeal, Criminal Division, so held in dismissing an appeal by Leslie Edward Wellman against a sentence of two years imprisonment with an order for extended supervision under section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and registration under the Sex Offenders Act 1997 to apply for 10 years imposed by the Crown Court at Middlesex (Criminal) on 22 November 1997. The appeal was allowed.

Miss Helen McCormack, assigned by the Registrar of Criminal Appeals, for the appellant.

LORD JUSTICE ROSE, giving the judgment of the court, said that on the evening of March 22, 1997, the appellant at his flat had supplied his daughter and her schoolfriend aged 13 with alcohol. The schoolfriend was sick twice and agreed to stay the night during

which the appellant visited her room three times and indecently assaulted her. After the last incident, the schoolfriend climbed out of the bathroom window and ran home.

Their Lordships were asked to consider the case of *Domett*, where, on appeal, a sentence of two years imprisonment for indecent assault on a victim of 10 years was reduced to 18 months for one act, and in which also were cited authorities that the court said showed an established tariff of sentencing.

His Lordships referred the court to the case of *R v L (Indecent Assault: Sentencing)* (The Times April 28, 1998) in which Lord Justice Henry analysed the authorities which in *Domett* for tariff, with which he respectfully disagreed, the schoolfriend climbed out of the bathroom window and ran home.

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Counting time spent in custody

Regina v Governor of Wandsworth Prison, Ex parte Sorhalind
Before Lord Justice Simon Brown and Lord Justice Aspill
[Judgment December 14]
Time spent in custody on remand for certain offences while also serving a sentence of imprisonment, did not count towards the serving of a sentence of imprisonment for those offences, even where the sentence for the earlier offence had already been reversed on appeal.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in dismissing an application for judicial review by Christopher Sorhalind of the decision of the prison service dated July 27, 1998, that the time he had served on remand while he was at the same time serving a sentence for other offences was not relevant in calculating his release date.

Section 67 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, as inserted and amended by section 49(2) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, provides: "(1) The length of any sentence of imprisonment imposed on an offender by a court shall be treated as reduced by any relevant period."

On October 31, 1997 the applicant was convicted in the magistrates' court of offences A and sentenced to a total of four months imprisonment.

As a short-term prisoner he was entitled to be released on December 31, 1997, after serving half his sentence, although he continued to be detained in custody in respect of offences B.

In February 1998 his appeal against conviction of offences A was allowed by the crown court. In March 1998 he was convicted of offences B and sentenced to a total of 30 months imprisonment. A further seven days imprisonment was added as a result of prison adjudications.

The applicant contended that he was due for release on December 19, 1998, that being 15 months and seven days after he was remanded in custody. The respondents said that the date was February 19, 1999.

Mr Duffy submitted that there was nothing in section 67 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 or other statutory provisions which prevented the respondent from giving the applicant credit for the time spent in custody between October 31, 1997 and December 31, 1997.

Miss Grey submitted that the sentences for the offences A were not rendered void when reversed on appeal. The sentences remained of legal effect and provided continuing lawful justification for the applicant's detention during the period.

In his Lordship's judgment, section 67(A) unambiguously provided that periods spent in custody while also serving another sentence were not only spent in custody by reason of an order of a court made in connection with any proceedings relating to that sentence.

As his Lordship had said in *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Naughton* (1997) 1 WLR 118, 120: "the word 'only' is inactivated simply so as to exclude periods spent in custody while serving another sentence."

The court in *R v Governor of Brockhill Prison, Ex parte Evis* (1997) 2 WLR 236 endorsed that view.

There was no need to distort the meaning of section 67(A) for justice to be accomplished. The sentencing judge, no doubt assisted by counsel, should recognise the opportunity before him to remedy any possible grievances by adjusting the sentences for offences B accordingly.

Mr Justice Aspill agreed. Solicitors: Goodall, Barnett, James, Brighton; Treasury Solicitor.

RACING

Plans at daily ra

RACING AHEAD
Robert Whaley
The best horse
and jockey
in the world

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and jockey
in the world

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Despite his size and athleticism, Olowokandi failed to attract any interest in England several years ago. He had a trial with Thames Valley Tigers, of the Budweiser League, but was not offered a contract. Then, after joining Pacific University in the United States, Olowokandi — who is still desperately wanted by Laszlo Nemeth, the England coach, for the national team — developed into one of the most dominating players at collegiate level, the breeding ground for NBA players.

... were all correct last Saturday

Cup syndicate comes under fire

With time fast running out before the America's Cup Challenger Series in Auckland, senior figures in the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) are becoming increasingly exasperated by the failure of the Spirit of Britain syndicate to secure primary commercial sponsors.

Great Britain has not been represented in the America's Cup at any of the past three stagings of the event and the RYA is anxious that a new start is made at Auckland in October, believing Britain has the talent to make its mark in what is arguably the most important competition in world sailing.

Rod Carr, the RYA racing manager, is unhappy that the Spirit of Britain campaign, led by the sailmaker, Angus Melrose, the yachtsman, Lawrie Smith and Professor Andrew

Edward Gorman, sailing correspondent, hears a racing manager's broadside over plans for Auckland

Graves, of Bath University, appears to have become bogged down. He is accusing the syndicate of holding British sailing to ransom.

"I'm getting more and more worried about it," Carr said. "We need this challenge. They [the Spirit of Britain] need to pull their fingers out."

"It's a classic case of a small group trying to run something. We ought to be following the New Zealand example. Everybody laughs at management by committee, but if the whole project was run by people who didn't have financial gain as one of their motives, it would be better off."

According to Carr and other sources, the Spirit syndicate, which has invested more than \$250,000 in qualifying pay-

ments for the cup, has been talking to a group of companies in the City that may be prepared to commit more than £10 million to enable a two-boat campaign to go ahead.

The companies are thought to be unhappy with the degree of control they have been offered and want a bigger say in how the project is run. It is thought a bid to redraw the structure of the campaign by Richard Down, of Integrated Communication Projects, was rejected by Graves and Melrose in October.

Carr said: "One gets the impression that Spirit of Britain would rather not have it happen than have it happen on someone else's terms. Graves does not return phone calls and Angus and Lawrie do not

have the management expertise... British sailing cannot be held hostage to fortune like this."

Chris Law, who has been told by Smith that he will drive the principal boat at Auckland, shares Carr's belief that the incentive to make money is getting in the way of what should be a campaign run in the interests of British sailing. "The campaign should be administered on behalf of the country as a charitable trust and the national body should be represented," he said.

Law, who is the No 2 match-racer in the world rankings but may be left on the sidelines in Auckland if Spirit founders, argued, however, that a very late start in commissioning boats could be to Britain's

advantage. "There are all the right ingredients there — we just have to put the pot in the oven," he said.

Professor Graves, who has worked hard over 18 months to recruit both technical and commercial sponsors for the project, is on the defensive. Yesterday he refused to clarify any detail about the problems facing the syndicate and claimed Carr was out of touch. "He doesn't know what he is talking about," he said.

Professor Graves added that the campaign is still on course to make it to Auckland and that a press statement would be issued in due course.

"I really have no comment to make," he said. "We are negotiating with several potential sponsors and existing sponsors and it would be quite wrong of me to say something that could be misinterpreted and which could cause a lot of damage."

TENNIS

New-look Henman opens with flourish

FROM ALIX RAMSAY IN QATAR

TENNIS has not felt like this since the heady days of Telford and the national championships, great occasions when the top seeds all had British names and the home crowd was guaranteed a winner — mainly because no one else was allowed to enter.

These days tennis, together with Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski, has moved on and for the first time on the ATP Tour, Henman and Rusedski are starting at each other from opposite ends of the draw sheet at the Qatar Open.

Occupying the top two spots in the seedings, the two men are favourites to take the lion's share of the \$1million prize-money and, after Henman's performance last night against Sjeng Schalken, of Holland, they appear to be ready to follow the script. It was an assured victory from the British No 1, who won 6-2, 6-3 in a little more than an hour.

Sporting a new haircut for the new season — he appears to have gone back to the barber who sharpened his head so alarmingly for the Davis Cup de laus autumn and at best the style is businesslike, at worst he could sue — Henman

was neat and tidy in almost every department.

Schalken is a solid sort of chap who has a fair few scalps to his name but he prefers to get his results with as few fireworks as possible. Tall and angular, the jaw is square and the feet are rectangular — he has a very upright stance as he plays and if the tennis does not work out, he has a promising future career as a lamp-post.

However, last night he was most definitely put in the shade by Henman, who was understandably pleased with his evening's work.

"For the first match of the year I am happy with the way I came out and I can't have any complaints," he said, showing that he can be just as unflashy as Schalken when he wishes.

"Hopefully my serve is always a dominant factor in any match, but when I was hitting my first serve I was winning the majority of points. This is definitely the best possible start to the year."

In the six weeks since Henman last put racket to ball in competition, he has been hard at work in London and the results were evident in the new



Lindsay Davenport, the world No 1, strides to a 6-2, 6-0 victory over Asa Carlsson, of Sweden, but the United States went down to defeat in the Hopman Cup in Perth

snap in his service and the decided spring in his step.

A couple of hiccups early on gave Schalken cause for hope in the shape of two break points, but, having had them snatched away by a determined Henman, he allowed himself to dwell on the disappointment and was promptly broken. From there, Henman was on a roll, wrapping up the opening set and skipping to a 3-0 lead in the second. After

that, the result was never in doubt.

Henman now plays Youssef El Ayraoui, who was a finalist here in 1996 for a place in the quarter-finals. El Ayraoui defeated Fabrice Santoro, who reached the final last year, 6-4, 6-1 on a day of few upsets.

The only worry, as ever, hung over Goran Ivanisevic, who took his time to get the better of Francisco Clavet 6-3, 6-7, 6-4, helped on his way by a few

Croatian epithets of a less than savoury nature.

Today it is Rusedski's turn, to get the British flag, of which there are several scattered around the centre court, fluttering. He faces Bernd Karbacher, of Germany, a positive veteran at 30. The most impressive part of Karbacher's game is the length of his name and, coupled with a series of injuries and illnesses, he has done very little for a very long time.

Fish on the menu again

Rick Stein's Seafood Odyssey

BBC2, 8.30pm

As the title implies there is much travelling in Stein's third television series as he leaves his native Cornwall far behind in search of new seafood dishes to demonstrate and to drool over. Stein is one of the best of the ever-expanding army of TV chefs, with the rare gift of being able to communicate passion without resorting to gimmickry. He is also a bit of a culture vulture. Not many cooks quote Tennyson and Conrad, or muse on the power of Britain's Peter Craxas. He begins in Naples, where it is not hard to be passionate, and is soon at work on a local seafood specialty which he says he could eat for a week and not get tired of. For contrast he makes for the cold light and big skies of the North Sea, singling out Suffolk as the quintessential English county and making magic with cod, beer, bacon and cabbage.

Peak Practice

ITV, 9.00pm

There may be some ungracious souls who think that the Derbyshire medical drama has not been the same since Amanda Burrow and Kevin Whately left, but ten million regular viewers would disagree. With that size of audience this seventh series has a formality and the eighth is on the way. When Peak Practice was last on air, Gary Mavers' morose Dr Atwood had been left at the altar by the capricious Dr Erica. Since she has left the cast as well, the surgery has a post to fill. Enter Dr Joanna Graham (Haydn Gwynne), though not before she has given up her present job as a casualty surgeon. And thereby hangs this evening's plot, in which Dr Atwood takes his best friend rally driving, turns the car over and has a seriously injured man on his conscience. The good Dr Graham is the angel of mercy.

Great Railway Journeys

BBC2, 9.30pm

Welcome back to an invariably watchable series in which celebrities who are not necessarily railway buffs hop on a train and send back a visual essay about the experience. Most of the trips have a touch of the exotic, at least compared with catching the 8.04 from Orpington. Ian Hislop, Editor of



Rick Stein travels the world looking for new seafood recipes (BBC2, 8.30pm)

Private Eye and a practised hand at television documentary, launches the new series in India as he takes the train from Calcutta to the desert forts of Rajasthan. Travelling from the Marxist state of West Bengal to the feudal world of the maharajahs, Hislop ponders on the Taj Mahal, the legacy of the British Raj and India as a nuclear power. And as somebody whose magazine has often ended up in the courts, he notes the much lower cost of libel settlements in India than in Britain.

Full Frontal in Flip Flops

ITV, 10.40pm (Scotland, 10.30pm)

Like buses, documentaries tend to come along in pairs. After a recent Channel 4 programme about naturism it is the turn of ITV, with a film which covers broadly the same ground though in its own style. It was made by Don Boyd, a maverick producer of the 1970s and 1980s (Scum, Derek Jarman's The Tempest, Scrubbers) whose more recent work includes TV series with Ruby Wax. Full Frontal is partly a piece of reportage and partly a personal view. Boyd's researches take him to a naturist wedding, a beach in Dorset and a campsite in Hampshire. On the "when in Rome" principle Boyd strips off himself and invites his reluctant production team to do likewise. This may be why he gets such an uninhibited response from people who might not normally welcome the intrusion of television cameras. Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

No Triumph, No Tragedy

Radio 4, 9.00am

For a man who cannot speak without a ventilator, and even then only in short bursts, Christopher Reeve gives a remarkably detailed account of his disability when interviewed by Peter White. Reeve, paralysed by a horrid accident that broke his neck, is best known in films for playing Superman. White follows the considerable example of other journalists in not making capital out of the sad spectacle of the gravity-defying crusader being grounded. However, White does press Reeve to say whether he believes in the possibility of his ever being able to walk again. Reeve's reply provides food for thought for those of us who tend to forget that when so-called miracles do occur, they do not happen with the speed of a flash of lightning.

RADIO 1 (BBC)

6.30am Zoe Ball 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Kevin Greening 2.00am Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Chris Moyles 5.00 Dave Pearce 6.15am Chris Moyles 7.00am The Evening Session 10.00 Digital Update with Rachel Heywood and Charlie Brooker 10.10 John Peel 12.00 The Breakfast Show 2.00am Chris Moyles 4.00 Scott Mills

RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Alan Lester 7.30 Sarah Kennedy 8.30 Ken Bruce 12.00 Jimmy Young 2.00pm Ed Stewart 5.05 Johnnie Walker 7.00 Alan Freeman: Their Greatest Hits. New series (1/13) 8.00 Nightrider 9.00am The Breakfast Show 10.00am Susan Jeffers 11.00am The Breakfast Show 12.00am Susan Jeffers 1.00pm The Breakfast Show 2.00pm Susan Jeffers 3.00pm The Breakfast Show 4.00pm Susan Jeffers 5.00pm The Breakfast Show 6.00pm Susan Jeffers 7.00pm The Breakfast Show 8.00pm Susan Jeffers 9.00pm The Breakfast Show 10.00pm Susan Jeffers 11.00pm Susan Jeffers 12.00am Susan Jeffers

RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC)

5.00am Morning Reports 5.00 Breakfast 9.00 Nicky Campbell 12.00 The Breakfast Show 1.00pm The Tuesday Match. Russell Fyfe introduces coverage of the night's football action 8.00am Park Life (1) 10.00am Late Night Live 1.00am All Night. Includes updates from the first day of the 11th Test

VIRGIN

6.30am Chris Evans 8.30am Russ Williams 1.00pm Nick Abbot 4.00am Bobby Hale 7.30am Harriet Scott 10.00am Mark Forrest 1.00pm James Martin 4.30am Jeremy Clark

TALK RADIO

6.00am Bill O'Brien 8.00am Sally Mann 9.00am Scott Chisholm 12.00am Lorraine Kelly 2.00pm Anne Robinson 4.00pm Peter Dinkley 5.00pm The Sports Zone 6.00am James White 1.00pm Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air with Stephanie Hughes. Includes Bach (Orchestral Suite No 3 in D, BWV1068); Schumann (Konzertstück in F); Mendelssohn (Rondo Capriccioso)

9.00 Music Movers with Peter Hobday. Includes Fela (Nights in the Gardens of Spain); Beethoven (O Rosa Fortuna); Vaga Luna (she is pregnant); Berlioz (Harold in Italy); Debussy, orch Bussier (Petite Suite)

10.30 Artist of the Week: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau

11.00 Sound Stories: Five Paintings — William Hogarth with Donald Macleod

12.00 Composer of the Week: Postlude Schubert (Piano Trio No 2 in E flat, D929) (1)

2.00 The BBC Orchestra presents BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins and Eric Shaw with Nicola Lourd, violin, MacCunn (The Ship of the Fionn O'Connell); Haydn (Symphony No 55 in E flat minor); Mendelssohn (Missa Concerto in E minor); Beethoven (Symphony No 6 in F, Pastorale)

4.00 Voices Ian Burnside introduces a specially recorded programme of music by Schubert and by those composing under his influence (1)

4.45 Music Machine with Tommy Pearson

5.30am (FM) World News

5.30 (LW) Test Match Special Australia v England. Coverage from Sydney of the fourth day's play

5.35 (FM) Shipping 5.40 (FM) Inverness Forecast

5.45 (FM) Prayer for the Day with Lorraine Byrne

5.47 (FM) Farming Today Rural issues, with Anna Hill (FM only until 7.00am) Today introduced by Sue MacGregor and James Naughtie

6.00 No Triumph, No Tragedy Peter White tells of disabled achievers in the US, beginning with the actor Christopher Reeve. See Choice (1/6)

9.30am Lorraine Kelly. Jeremy Clark reports on the crisis facing Britain's pig farmers (1/2)

9.45 (FM) Daily Services

9.45 (FM) Series: The Vanished World The second part of H.E. Bates's autobiography

10.00 Women's Hour with Martha Kearney

10.05 Newsnight (1/2)

11.30 The Gallatin and Simpson Radio Playhouse: Naughtie for Thy Comfort A tale of a socialist man who gets a less than sympathetic reception from the Simpsons. Starring Robert Davies (2/4)

12.00 (LW) News Headlines: Shipping Forecast

12.00 (FM) News 12.04pm US and Yours Topical consumer news and investigations, introduced by Tom Robinson and Mark Whistler

1.00 The World at One with Nick Clarke

1.30 Full Orchestra Two leading British orchestras test their musical knowledge in the quiz Tommy Pearson presents

2.00 The Archers (1)

2.15 Afternoon Play: Elemental Tales — Gail Four tales about human passions unleashed by primal forces. See Choice

3.00 The Exchange 0171-580 4444 Eddie Hall invites listeners' opinions on a topical issue

3.30 The Melling Pot Tom Jones explores connections between culture and cooking (1)

BBC WORLD SERVICE

5.00am The World Today 7.00am News 7.15 On The Spot. Colombia 7.30am News 8.00am News 8.10am News 8.20am News 8.30am News 8.40am News 8.50am News 9.00am News 9.10am News 9.20am News 9.30am News 9.40am News 9.50am News 10.00am News 10.10am News 10.20am News 10.30am News 10.40am News 10.50am News 11.00am News 11.10am News 11.20am News 11.30am News 11.40am News 11.50am News 12.00am News 12.10am News 12.20am News 12.30am News 12.40am News 12.50am News 1.00am News 1.10am News 1.20am News 1.30am News 1.40am News 1.50am News 2.00am News 2.10am News 2.20am News 2.30am News 2.40am News 2.50am News 3.00am News 3.10am News 3.20am News 3.30am News 3.40am News 3.50am News 4.00am News 4.10am News 4.20am News 4.30am News 4.40am News 4.50am News 5.00am News 5.10am News 5.20am News 5.30am News 5.40am News 5.50am News 6.00am News 6.10am News 6.20am News 6.30am News 6.40am News 6.50am News 7.00am News 7.10am News 7.20am News 7.30am News 7.40am News 7.50am News 8.00am News 8.10am News 8.20am News 8.30am News 8.40am News 8.50am News 9.00am News 9.10am News 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at the last for
San Francisco 49ers

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Henman roars
back into
action in Doha



Wiseman's departure signals change

FA prepares for radical restructuring

BY MATT DICKINSON

THERE was so much spin-doctor talk of "fresh dawns" and "visions for the millennium" in Lancaster Gate yesterday that it might have been a press conference for new Labour. This hailing of a glorious age, though, came from the modernising vanguard of the Football Association, who barely gave Keith Wiseman time to head back to Southampton and obscurity before they launched their reformist agenda.

Wiseman resigned as chairman of the FA at 1.10pm, finally accepting that he had been outflanked by his opponents who regarded him as an ineffectual leader on the domestic, never mind the world, stage. His decision to step down was unanimously accepted by the 91-member FA Council, who will find that they are the next targets for the modernisers after the culling of Wiseman and Graham Kelly, the former chief executive.

Less than four hours after Wiseman's resignation, those who would succeed him were gathered in a hotel describing how the new leader must be a man of integrity and vision if the FA is to be transformed from its cumbersome committee structure into a streamlined business befitting its multimillion-pound turnover.

A working party is already on the verge of publishing a report as to how the full council, with an average age of 64, can be whittled down into an effective unit of a dozen or so. The new chairman may be paid for the first time in the FA's 135-year history.

Who that will be is a question that will not be answered until a vote by the FA Council in June, thereby guaranteeing more than five months of political manoeuvring. Geoff Thompson, the vice-chairman, will head the FA until the summer.

mer and may now prove the front-runner to succeed Wiseman. As secretary of the Sheffield and Hallamshire County FA, Thompson's support is based in the shires, which still hold 60 per cent of the seats on the full council.

With their influence under increasing threat from the professional game — as represented by Dave Richards, chairman of Sheffield Wednesday, David Sheepshanks, chairman of Ipswich Town, and David Dein, vice-chairman of Arsenal — the counties may engineer Thompson in as chairman to ensure that they have a proper say in the radical changes that are inevitable.

Sheepshanks, by far the most likely alternative to Thompson, will need to use all his Old Eborian charm over the next five months to convince them that he is acting in their best interests rather than those of the leading clubs.

Who will succeed Kelly as chief executive may take even longer to determine. The position will be advertised this week, but Thompson accepted yesterday that it is unlikely that an appointment will be made before the chairmanship is resolved in June.

Whoever becomes chairman and chief executive, they will preside over a revolution at the FA. "Today represents the beginning of a new dawn for the FA," Sheepshanks said, his thoughts echoed by Thompson. "If we can't move in the right direction we will die," Thompson said. "We may have had a hundred or more years of operating on the same lines, but we are now moving into a new millennium and

need to move forward with a more businesslike approach. "The new chairman must have integrity, leadership and vision. He must also have the ability to convince the present members of the council that there is going to be a change." That may be a bit like persuading turkeys to vote for Christmas, but Kelly and Wiseman will testify that the new movers and shakers at the FA are ruthless in their methods.

The new chairman will also, according to Thompson, have "to build bridges with Fifa, Uefa and the Home Counties" after the cash-for-votes controversy that cost Wiseman and Kelly their jobs. "It was a very grave error of judgment by both of them," Thompson said of the unauthorised £4.2 million payment to the FA of Wales.

At the full council meeting yesterday, Wiseman spoke persuasively in his own defence, as should be expected from a solicitor, for 65 minutes. Once the debate was opened to the floor, however, the counter-arguments came thick and fast, with Thompson, Dein and Sheepshanks among the dozen councillors who spoke against the departing chairman.

"I have achieved my objective in providing the council with a full explanation of the events which have been the subject of so much publicity," Wiseman said. "I am grateful that they felt able to unanimously record that in accepting my resignation, they wished to make it clear that no aspersions were cast on my integrity or honesty. That means a great deal to me."

With that, Wiseman left and the race to succeed him began. The only declared candidate is Ken Bates, the Chelsea chairman, whose outspokenness has already ensured the failure of his campaign. "Many of the comments I have seen attributed to him have been a masterpiece of demagoguery of FA staff," Frank Patisson, a moderniser from the Durham FA, said.



Wiseman heads back to Southampton after resigning as chairman of the Football Association yesterday

Power vacuum that leaves England looking isolated

Rob Hughes says upheavals have left the FA split and devoid of influence on the international stage

THE removal of Keith St John Wiseman from the Football Association, the first chairman to be forced out of office in the organisation's 135-year history, is being presented as an act of unification. Interesting. We are told that Wiseman's resignation must imply no aspersion of his honesty or integrity.

Now, after the resignation last month of the chief executive, Graham Kelly, Lancaster Gate is short of its two senior executives. And no one is to blame, except the media. They, in Wiseman's parting words, "wildly and wholly inaccurately" reported what was going on behind the scenes.

In truth, Wiseman's inept scheming has left a legacy of an English game lacerated with division, with Glenn Hoddle vulnerable as national coach. There is virtually open warfare between the men of commerce of the FA Carling Premiership clubs, whose intolerance of rule by amateurs is well documented.

They, and indeed their representatives within the FA, are more intent on the stock market fluctuations of the share price of their clubs than the wider duty Lancaster Gate must have for football at large. The Premiership clubs are no more likely to give the breath of life to those one rung beneath them than countenance a share of football's ever-increasing revenues being spent to insure the welfare of a game played by millions on sports grounds and parks.

As if that is not enough. There is also the internecine fighting even within the FA Executive. The maverick Chelsea chairman, Ken Bates, has

been speaking for weeks of his willingness to sweep away sleaze and the archaic structures within the FA. He fell silent yesterday. Temporarily, no doubt. But David Sheepshanks, the chairman of Ipswich, did his best in a supporting role to speak of unity and a new determination, to drive the national game forward.

One almost immediate dilemma is how those temporarily charged with leadership can restore respect for the word of the FA, specifically among the 24 executive members of Fifa, the world governing body. Those members hold the votes for the World Cup in 2006, although if the Fifa president, Sepp Blatter, gets his way there will be biennial World Cups, and with so few countries able to cope with the biennial 64-game finals, England may have less to worry about than we ever dreamt.

It was the misguided efforts of Wiseman, and the limp acquiescence to his methods by Kelly, that brought the pair down. Wiseman, correct in believing that England crucially lacked standing and influence on international committees, made unauthorised payments to the FA of Wales in what he saw as an attempt to get their help in gaining a seat on the Fifa executive. It would be fascinating to hear the response of some members when they, knowing precisely the truth, receive deputations from Lancaster Gate attempting to persuade them that the

word of an English Football Association chairman can, from now on, be trusted without hesitation.

"Those of us who hold temporary responsibility," said David Davies who has replaced Kelly until a successor is found, "know what has to be done and won't be found wanting."

Words are Davies' forte. So is presentation. The Government may be taking spin doctors, the FA is promoting them. Davies was educated at Sheffield University, and his "temporary" chairman, the



Bates: hat in the ring

Sheffield lawyer, Geoff Thompson, will not be found wanting in terms of directness or boldness. Thompson, indeed, might well have been the FA Council's first choice when they voted for Wiseman. He is a man of the County FA structures, a barrister, a wicket-keeper, a no mean runner, a man who will neither duck the bouncers nor drop what he is entrusted to hold.

Nevertheless, the fact that the FA, in its usual unwieldy manner, will not select a chairman until June, leaves something of a void for the first six months of a crucial year for canvassing for World Cup 2006.

"We have today closed a chapter, a turbulent and personally painful one to all involved," asserted Davies. It is not closed, for many who care deeply about the honour, as well as the profit-making of England's expanding game.

This has to be a new beginning. Lancaster Gate has never been a place for clean or concise decision-making. Whoever emerges in charge will have a device of a job restoring the confidence of the public at home and winning a cut-throat battle for credibility abroad.

David Dein, the Arsenal vice-chairman, who knows a little more than most about operating in the corridors of power promised: "Its onwards and upwards now."

Whether his own hat was in the ring for a share of that leadership he didn't say. He was onwards and upwards to Preston, where his team were competing in the oldest and most glorious contest of them all, the Football Association Challenge Cup.

No ICC cash to help umpire system

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

THE International Cricket Council (ICC) is refusing to give financial backing to any programme aimed at improving the third umpire system.

The problem was highlighted during the final Ashes Test between Australia and England at Sydney yesterday when Steve Taubel, the third umpire, failed to give Michael Slater, the Australia opener, run out when he appeared to be short of his ground. Slater, on 35 at the time, went on to make 123.

The ICC, however, reject suggestions that it should pump money into a scheme to set up four fixed cameras level with the wickets at each side of the ground.

"We're not looking to fund it at this stage," Clive Hitchcock, the ICC cricket operations manager, said. "There's a huge cost involved. Some countries are going down that road and providing square-angle cameras at each end."

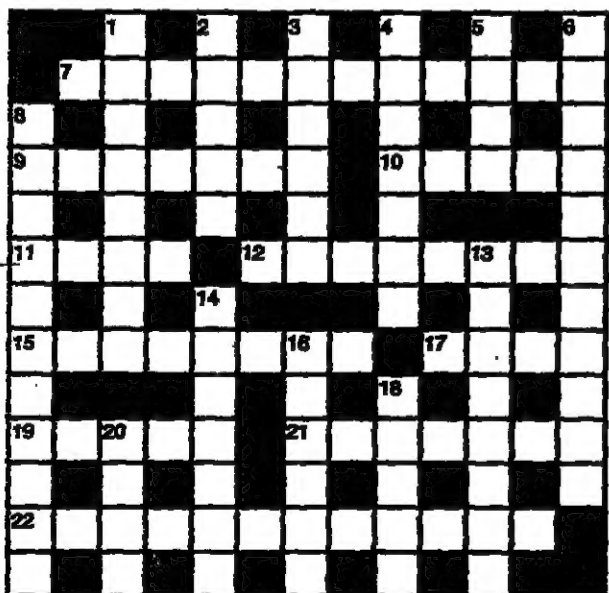
"It's something that we're working on because some countries provide better facilities than others. South Africa have square-on cameras but their project has received private sponsorship. We're looking to see if we can make it standard across the board. But it is the responsibility of the home board to provide camera angles in liaison with the host broadcaster."

Television replays appeared to confirm that Slater was short of his crease after the stumps were broken by Dean Headley's direct hit from deep mid-on. He was given not out because Taubel did not have the benefit of a square-on camera but even the Australian opener believes it is time for more cameras to be used to stop similar controversies.

"If you're going to have the third umpire, then get the cameras in place so it's conclusive," Slater said. "If there's a camera on the other side of the ground square-on, there's no doubt you would know one way or the other. The third umpire can only make a judgment on what he sees at the time."

Hitchcock added: "When the third umpire makes his decision, he must be 100 per cent sure that the batsman is out and I'm sure the he applied that in Slater's case."

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1606

ACROSS

- 7 Being always 'ill' (12)
9 Intuitive sympathy (7)
10 Sensitive chaplain (5)
11 Ring: a croquet target (4)
12 Always given similar rule (8)
13 Where Drake played bowls (1588) (8)
17 Free ride (4)
19 Indian police baton (5)
21 In summary (7)
22 Learn to master (3,3,4,2)

DOWN

- 1 Paris. Drunroll. Rhenish for example (8)
2 Two-dot stop (5)
3 Fond of conversation (6)
4 Tiny offcut: fragment, extract (7)
5 Raised: sounds like staple food (4)
6 (Hard struggle) to cause weakness, damage (4,3,4)
8 Island chain (11)
13 Cartoon maker (8)
14 This evening (7)
16 Prize (6)
18 A wren: a spinning frame (5)
20 Carry, wield (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1605

- ACROSS: 1 Army 3 Frame-up 8 Cantata 9 Shyl 10 Sprat 11 Hampden 13 Diacresis 17 Layette 19 Tonic 20 Train 22 Gunwale 23 Hot seat 24 Term
DOWN: 1 Access 2 Man Friday 3 Featherweight 4 Assam 5 Ebb 6 Pylons 7 Tantra 12 Disengage 14 Skinny 15 Flitch 16 Screams 18 Tense 21 Ant

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